



2,844
THE TEN BEST IDEAS
OF THE DECADE

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WHY LAWYERS ARE
TURNING TO GUMSHOES

I'M HAPPY TO BE TOTALLY FOOLY

England
page 16

Cockroaches and mice found in Diana's favourite supermarket

STEVE BOGGAN

Sainsbury's flagship supermarket, which boasts the Princess of Wales and Elton John as customers, has been threatened with prosecution because of an infestation of vermin.

Correspondence obtained by the *Independent* shows environmental health officials from the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea have been concerned about hygiene at the Cromwell Road store, west London, since last February.

Despite two visits during which warnings were given to the store management, the environmental services department of the council found as recently as 14 November that "there is a current problem with a mouse infestation in areas of the premises". Staff at the store say they also regularly see cockroaches.

A letter dated 15 November from Aoife Gardiner, a Kensington and Chelsea environmental health officer, to Peter Sones, general manager of the

store, says: "Urgent and effective attention must be given to this situation with a view to eliminating the infestation from the premises and preventing any further ingress of pests. Pest infestations in food premises are obviously an unacceptable situation. Please note this Directorate may consider taking further legal action on this matter."

Mrs Gardiner said she was aware that a pest control company, Peter Cox Environmental Services, had been engaged

to tackle the problems, but she concluded: "It is my opinion that this problem is not being dealt with in a sufficiently effective manner."

She added that she raised the question of areas of the store being securely proofed against "pests" on 16 and 28 February, but the letter demonstrates clear dissatisfaction with the action taken by the food group.

The store is regularly described by industry experts as the group's most profitable and by the media as the country's

most successful pick-up supermarket for singles.

As well as Princess Diana, Princes William and Harry and a host of ladies-in-waiting, staff say celebrity shoppers include Joanna Lumley, Elton John, Lady Sarah Armstrong-Jones, Willie Rushton, Nicholas Witchell and Moira Stuart.

While appearing at nearby Earls Court, Whitney Houston and Madonna had staff buy provisions from the store.

Management has clearly taken the warnings to heart. Mcm-

os have appeared on a first-floor staff noticeboard advising employees of the importance of cleanliness and hygiene. A small wallchart carries pictures of rats, mice, cockroaches, silverfish, flies, wasps and ants, and advises workers on what to do if they see them.

An internal memo to management from Jock Cross, the deputy store manager, a copy of which has been obtained by the *Independent*, warns: "We have to give this situation major priority as we are under threat of

prosecution for [being] a dirty store. If we are prosecuted, the business implications and management implications are of an extremely serious nature."

Staff at the store said they regularly saw mice in storage areas and in the staff canteen on the first floor. One employee said she often saw cockroaches.

The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea confirmed there was a problem at the store and said health officials visited yesterday to ensure Sainsbury's was solving it.

"They have given us a report outlining what action they are taking to eradicate the problem," a spokeswoman said. "We will consider taking action under the 1990 Food Safety Act if we feel that the work is not being carried out diligently."

Sainsbury's said last night it had "implemented a full and intensive control programme" and was working closely with the local authority to eradicate the problem. A spokeswoman said the company felt the situation was "under control".

Last-ditch deal rescues Irish peace

New accord to greet Clinton

COLIN BROWN
Chief Political Correspondent

A compromise by both sides led to a last-minute breakthrough in the Anglo-Irish peace talks last night, after a day of desperate negotiations between officials to reach an accord before the arrival of the US President Bill Clinton in Britain today.

John Major and John Bruton were expected to put the seal on the agreement to end the deadlock and open the way to all-party talks involving Sinn Fein and the Ulster Unionists.

After brinkmanship on both sides, Dublin and London tried to avoid claiming victory but there were reports at Westminster of a compromise by the Irish. One ministerial source said: "The Irish gave way and that has suddenly swung everything in favour of a deal."

The arrival of the US President put pressure on both sides to reach a deal, and British officials privately admitted that the British side wanted to avoid Mr Clinton being seen as the peacemaker. The two Prime Ministers may announce the details while Mr Clinton is in Britain, but the US President will not be allowed to bring the two Prime Ministers together like the famous Arafat-Rabin peace handshake on the lawn of the White House.

"There will be no tryst in Dublin," said one official.

British sources said the Irish were clearly hoping that Mr Clinton will now put pressure on Gerry Adams, the Sinn Fein president, to accept the deal. There is compromise on both sides. There are some things that Adams will not like. But there are other things that will have Ian Paisley hopping mad and David Trimble won't like."

The formula will provide for an international commission, probably headed by George Mitchell, Mr Clinton's respected economic adviser, to oversee the dismantling of some of the

IRA arms caches. In a twin-track approach, there will be simultaneous preliminary talks between the two governments and party leaders. They will attempt to lay the ground for all-party talks, which could start in February. The Ulster Unionists' proposal for an elected

commission on Washington Three and on all the weapons, including those held by the security forces. The British insist the commission will not be able to make recommendations on those two issues, which the nationalists say are crucial.

However, on the Irish side, there was an understanding that the commission would be able to report on those issues.

Mr Major faced Tory back-bench pressure in the Commons not to give way on the decommissioning demand for the IRA. He replied: "The building blocks paper we published recently sets down specific requirements for the body's report. It sets down also that the international body is not being established to make recommendations on when the decommissioning should start. That has not been changed."

The issue was raised during Prime Minister's Questions by Mrs Margaret Ewing (SNP Moray) who said: "There is now widespread concern at what appears to be an impasse. Do these circumstances do you now feel it is time to establish an international commission to help matters on?"

Mr Major told her: "I naturally hope we will soon be able to launch what has become known as the twin-track initiative. I have had a further conversation with the Irish Prime Minister earlier today and I expect to speak to him later on this afternoon."

Ulster Unionist leader David Trimble said he was "deeply sceptical" about the "twin-track" strategy that London and Dublin were working on.

He insisted it would not deal with the real problems. "It would merely set up some procedures and postpone ... the crucial decision on whether Sinn Fein-IRA are prepared to exclusively peaceful means by beginning to dispose of their weapons," he said.

The compromise agreed by the British is that Sinn Fein will be able to give evidence to the

assembly in Ulster will be included.

The Prime Minister assured MPs in the Commons, as rumours of an emergency summit swept through Westminster, that there would be no compromise over the British demand that Sinn Fein should make progress on decommissioning before being admitted to the all-party talks.

A senior Government source said the Irish had agreed to the formula for a twin-track strategy broadly laid out last Friday, before pulling back. Under the formula, the British insist that the precondition on arms, known as Washington Three, will not be included in the remit of the proposed international commission to deal with decommissioning of weapons.

The compromise agreed by the British is that Sinn Fein will be able to give evidence to the

IN BRIEF

Patients' lives 'at risk'

Patients' lives are being threatened following surgery by a "substantial" shortfall in critical care facilities in British hospitals, doctors warned. Page 2

Government wastage

Government office space, equivalent to nearly two Canary Wharf towers or 70 Wembley stadium pitches, is costing the taxpayer £100m a year. Page 5

US 'shifting on Bosnia'

President Clinton seems to have begun to nudge a sceptical US public towards support for sending 20,000 American troops to the Balkans. Page 7

Boxer in hiding

The British boxer Warren Stowe has retreated to his South African hotel room and is staying there most of each day after his fight in Cape Town on Sunday night was halted by gunfire. Page 8

Libel trial told of feud

The feud between the MP David Asby and his wife erupted again when she shouted "Queenie, queenie" at him and an elderly male friend, the High Court was told.

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PETER VICTOR

Parents at a London school were warned to watch their children for signs of meningitis after a 16-year-old girl was admitted to hospital with the disease. The scare follows five cases of meningitis in Lincoln and the death yesterday of a university student from Leeds.

Parents of girls at the 700-pupil Godolphin Latymer School in Hammersmith, west London, were told of the latest outbreak of the disease by letter yesterday after the girl was admitted to St Thomas's Hospital on Saturday.

In the letter, Dr Tony Ellam, consultant in communicable disease control at Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow Health Authority, said parents should be "alert to the possibility that your child is becoming unwell with 'flu-like' symptoms with aches and pains in the joints or muscles or an increasingly severe headache".

Headmistress Margaret Rudland confirmed yesterday that the school remained open. Dr Ellam said pupils had not been given antibiotics because their effect was short-lived and tended to lull parents into believing that their children would be safe from the disease in the long term.

Dr Ellam said that notifications of the disease were "tracking at 20 per cent up on last year" and warned that the increase was likely to be exacerbated by an expected flu epidemic.

The toll in Lincoln now stands at five following the deaths of Robert Newlin, also 19, a carpet shop manager, and Kelly Roberts and Samuel Birrell, both aged 15 and pupils at the City School.

Caroline East, 14, another pupil at the school who contracted the disease last week, is now off the critical list. Her condition is said to be stable. A 40-year-old Lincoln man is still

critically ill in Nottingham City Hospital.

In the Leeds case, a 21-year-old girl, who was studying at Leeds University, died from meningococcal meningitis at the same time as three schoolchildren and a baby were hit by what is believed to be the same bacterial strain.

The three children – a boy aged 16 and two girls aged nine and 10 – are recovering from the illness. The infant is still very poorly.

The university student who died has not been named. It is believed she was an exchange student and her parents are flying over from Canada.

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news

Patients put at risk by delays after operations

LIZ HUNT

Health Editor

The lives of thousands of patients are being threatened in the vital days following operations by a "substantial" shortfall in critical-care facilities in British hospitals, leading doctors warned yesterday.

Their independent report says that "scarce and expensive" intensive-care beds are being misused, and are not available to more-need patients, because doctors have nowhere else to put post-operative patients. Other patients are being returned too soon to the "relatively unsafe environment" of the general wards, where nursing and medical care is less intensive. Many more patients who need urgent or emergency surgery are forced to wait for hours until operating theatres become available, because few hospitals have designated emergency theatres.

The latest report of the National Confidential Enquiry into Perioperative Deaths (NCEPOD), which analysed almost 20,000 post-operative

deaths in patients aged between 6 and 70 years, between April 1992 and March 1993, paints a grim picture of the state of critical care in the health service and some private hospitals.

Only one in five of the hospitals had high-dependency units — intermediary wards with a higher nurse-to-patient ratio than general wards, but less than that provided in intensive care. One in ten did not have a recovery room where patients could recover from anaesthesia.

Professor John Blandy, chairman of the inquiry, said: "Any hospital admitting emergency patients, and hospitals admitting complex elective patients, must have adequate facilities for intensive or high-dependency care at all times." Up to 36 per cent of the emergency or urgent operations analysed in the report were performed "out of hours" — between 6pm and 8am on weekdays, and at weekends — indicating that the patients were kept waiting for theatres. Only a third of hospitals are believed to have operating theatres dedicated to emergency surgery, and there

was anecdotal evidence that some were being closed or misused by trust hospitals under pressure in other areas.

The NCEPOD survey, the largest to date, is based on confidential questionnaires returned by more than 3,000 consultant surgeons and anaesthetists in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and makes nine recommendations for the improvement of patient care. It also highlights poor medical record-keeping and loss of notes as problem areas, and emphasises previous recommendations that trainees with less than three years' experience should not anaesthetise or operate without supervision.

Commenting on the report, General Malone, Health Minister, said that the Department of Health was already tackling problems on the best use of intensive care and high-dependency beds.

■ *The Report of the National Confidential Enquiry into Perioperative Deaths 1992/1993: NCEPOD, 35-43 Lincoln's Inn Fields, London WC2A 3PN; £10.*

Tragic lack of resources

The Report of the National Confidential Enquiry into Perioperative Deaths has revealed sometimes lethal shortages in hospital facilities. It looked at 20,000 post-operative deaths and the following three cases illustrate the danger that emergency patients may face in ill-equipped hospitals.

Case 1: A 47-year-old woman was admitted to a neurosurgical unit in a District General Hospital suffering from a benign tumour of spinal nerve sheaths and an infection. Surgery was delayed because there was no high-dependency unit bed, no immediate access to a theatre,

CASE STUDIES

no neurosurgical nurses, and lack of monitoring equipment.

Surgery took place two weeks after a decision to operate was made, and she died of meningitis 14 days later.

NCEPOD conclusion: Hospitals with this level of resource should not be undertaking this type of surgery.

Case 2: A 26-year-old man was admitted to a specialist unit in a District General Hospital for removal of a blood clot on the brain. He was seen by a registrar surgeon and by the senior house officer anaesthetist,

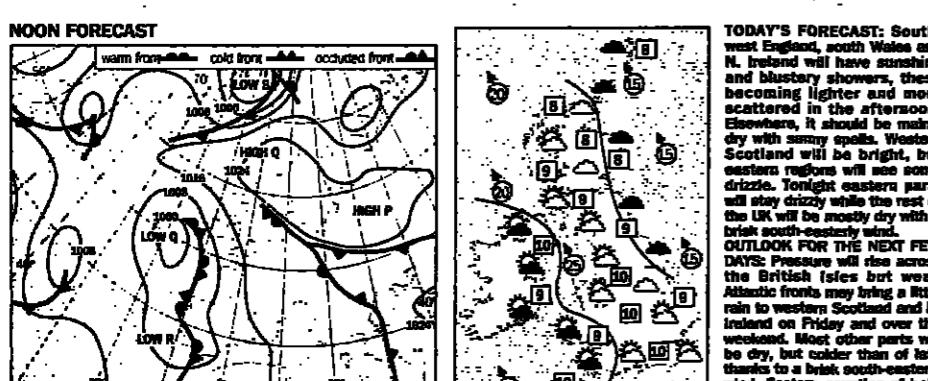
both of whom had two years' experience. The operation took place at 4am on a Saturday. He died the same day.

NCEPOD conclusion: Hospitals with this level of resource should not be undertaking this type of surgery.

Case 3: A 26-year-old man injured in a major road accident was admitted to a hospital with no intensive care unit. He waited 18 hours for surgery and died from kidney failure shortly after being transferred to another hospital.

NCEPOD conclusion: The patient should never have been admitted to the hospital in the first place.

weather



High pressure will move slowly south-east and intensify. High pressure will be slow moving and will also intensify. Low pressure will fill in across the UK.

WORLD WEATHER

C T		C F		C F		C F		C F		C F	
Albion	10.50	Highland	9.48	Cloudy	7.45	London	6.43	Wales	5.43	Scotland	4.43
Almond	10.50	Highland	10.60	Cloudy	8.50	Edinburgh	7.62	Wales	6.62	Scotland	5.62
Angus	10.50	Highland	10.60	Cloudy	8.50	Glasgow	7.62	Wales	6.62	Scotland	5.62
Aberdeen	11.50	Highland	11.50	Cloudy	10.50	Cardiff	8.62	Wales	7.62	Scotland	6.62
Aberdeenshire	11.50	Highland	11.50	Cloudy	10.50	Sheffield	9.62	Wales	8.62	Scotland	7.62
Aberdeenshire	11.50	Highland	11.50	Cloudy	10.50	Birmingham	10.62	Wales	9.62	Scotland	8.62
Aberdeenshire	11.50	Highland	11.50	Cloudy	10.50	Nottingham	11.62	Wales	10.62	Scotland	9.62
Aberdeenshire	11.50	Highland	11.50	Cloudy	10.50	Leeds	12.62	Wales	11.62	Scotland	10.62
Aberdeenshire	11.50	Highland	11.50	Cloudy	10.50	Sheffield	13.62	Wales	12.62	Scotland	11.62
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Aberdeenshire	11.50	Highland	11.50	Cloudy	10.50	Cardiff	19.62	Wales	18.62	Scotland	17.62
Aberdeenshire	11.50	Highland	11.50	Cloudy	10.50	Birmingham	20.62	Wales	19.62	Scotland	18.62
Aberdeenshire	11.50	Highland	11.50	Cloudy	10.50	Sheffield	21.62	Wales	20.62	Scotland	19.62
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Aberdeenshire	11.50	Highland	11.50	Cloudy	10.50	Cardiff	27.62	Wales	26.62	Scotland	25.62
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Aberdeenshire	11.50	Highland	11.50	Cloudy	10.50	Sheffield	49.62	Wales	48.62	Scotland	47.62
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Aberdeenshire	11.50	Highland	11.50	Cloudy	10.50	Sheffield	53.62	Wales	52.62	Scotland	51.62
Aberdeenshire	11.50	Highland	11.50	Cloudy	10.50	London	54.62	Wales			

Joy in 150

news

Turner Prize: Winner finds support as most ambitious artist of his generation taking on frosty establishment

Hirst milks role as modern art's outrageous hero

LOUISA BUCK

Damien Hirst should have won the Turner Prize when he was nominated for it three years ago and I'm glad he's won it now. No one has done more to raise the profile of contemporary British art both at home and abroad – and by his outrageously ambitious art works and energetic ease at dipping and dodging between the role of artist, curator, film director and media maverick, he's fired an entire generation with the belief that, even in the frosty climate of the British art world, anything's possible.

But it's more than a prolific, energetic output and an engaging way with the popular press. Hirst is an extraordinary and serious artist – he produces images that lodge themselves in the psyche and deal with issues

that are at the same time mundane and massive. He manages to splice spectacle with profound meditations on who and what we are, whether it's a preserved animal, a cabinet of drugs or medical instruments or an explosive machine-made painting – his work grabs you by the throat and forces you to engage with it. It also proves that art can be funny, poetic and profound. That's why it gets under so many skins.

The work is also riddled with contradictions. It's as simple or as complex as you want it to be. Hirst presents a moving target – and he refuses to be pinned down to a single reading. Art buffs can talk about the legacy of Francis Bacon's writhing flesh contained within a geometric frame, the influence of Minimalism and Neo-Geo in Hirst's pristine containers, as

well as the whole history of *memento mori*; or there's the irony of something being killed to be preserved while simultaneously having eternal life in a liquid that's deadly poisonous. His hand-made paintings look mechanical and his mechanical paintings tap into the whole history of angst-ridden brushstrokes. His empty chairs and brimming ashtrays are mysteriously framed like film stills.

In winning the Turner, Hirst beat three others to the £20,000 prize. Mona Hatoum, a Palestinian exile made a 12-minute video of her body, outside and in. But mainly in. Footage of the pink internal passages is projected on the floor of a specially constructed cylindrical chamber.

The abstract painter Calum Innes applied turpentine to etch paint from monochrome canvases, which in the case of white paint requires careful scrutiny to detect anything at all.

The fourth nominee, Mark Wallinger used racing images, including film of four days' royal processions at last year's Ascot, and the purchase of his own racehorse, called *A Real Work Of Art*.

Our national hostility to mercurial success, high profile or any artist's willingness to play the media game has meant that up to now, Hirst has had a more serious reputation abroad than at home.

Let's hope that winning the Turner this will now change, and that the Tate will purchase his *Mother and Child Divided (Cow and Calf)* – a cow and calf bisected longitudinally and presented in two parts, so that they will at least have two of his works to put in their new gallery at Banksy.



On the hoof: Hirst's better half. Photograph: Dillon Bryden



High profile: Damien Hirst's work 'proves that art can be funny, poetic and profound'

Photograph: Dillon Bryden

Ofsted denies it censored report

FRAN ABRAMS
JUDITH JUDD

The school-inspection body has denied political interference after a report highlighting underfunding in a comprehensive was ordered to be withdrawn.

Jane Rochelle-Towle, head of The Coleshill School, Warwickshire, received a call from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), saying the report she had distributed to parents was incorrect. Two days later she was sent a revised version, with comments on the school's budget deleted. Among comments taken out of the draft report were suggestions that its financial difficulties stemmed not from mismanagement or local political decisions but from national government policy.

Warwickshire county councillors said the events raised serious questions about the integrity of the inspection process. Last night Eric Wood, the county's chief education officer, wrote to the Chief Inspector of Schools, Chris Woodhead, to demand an explanation of the incident.

Ofsted has denied the charge by county council, saying the report was altered by the contractor, Open Book, which employed a privatised inspection team, and not by its own officers or by the inspectors. Ofsted puts inspections out to tender, and private companies are among those that bid to carry them out. A spokeswoman said the revised version was the correct one, prepared by the registered inspector who was in charge of the inspection. Open Book had admitted the mistake.

"The error was made by the contractor who employs the registered inspector and has negotiated the contract. The contractor changed the registered inspector's report. The registered inspector was not consulted and had not agreed with the changed report. We have written to the school explaining the decision."

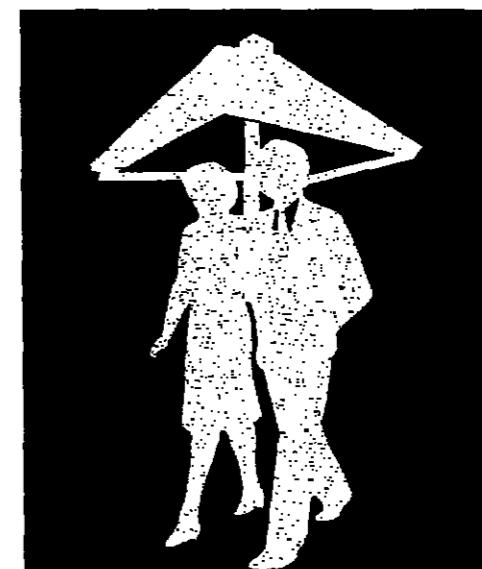
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Ashby libel case: Court hears men fled as 'all hell broke loose'

MP tells of furious wife's 'Queenie' jibe

The feud between the MP David Ashby and his wife erupted again when she shouted "Queenie, queenie" at himself and an elderly male friend the High Court was told yesterday.

Mr Ashby, who is suing the *Sunday Times* for libel over an allegation that he shared a double bed with a male friend during a holiday in Goa, said that after upsets in 1993, when he left his wife, Silvana, he desperately rebuilt bridges with her.

The couple even spent a pleasant Christmas together in 1994 with their daughter, Alexandra, 27.

But the peace was shattered when Mrs Ashby, 52, discovered her husband, the 55-year-old Tory MP for North West Leicestershire, and a friend, Edward O'Byrne, at his constituency home in Rennaston at the end of June.

Mr Ashby was watching TV and Mr O'Byrne, a retired civil servant who had recently suffered a stroke, was dozing in a



David Ashby: 'Obscenities'

said he tried to introduce his wife to Mr O'Byrne but she ignored him and shouted: "Queenie, queenie, so you are queenie."

She threw plates and kitchen knives at him, and he became worried that Mr O'Byrne might suffer another stroke.

The two men escaped to their separate rooms and locked themselves in while Mrs Ashby replaced the contents of her handbag, which Mr Ashby had emptied.

His wife then "stormed" up and down the landing, shouting obscenities about what they might be doing.

The next morning his wife threatened to kick him in the "bollocks" so that he could not have sex with anyone again, and pulled his glasses from his face, breaking them beyond repair.

He discovered she had taken his personal organiser from his briefcase and suspected she had also taken some important papers.

When he prieded her hand open to get her bedroom key so he could search the room, "all hell broke loose" and she started kicking and scratching.

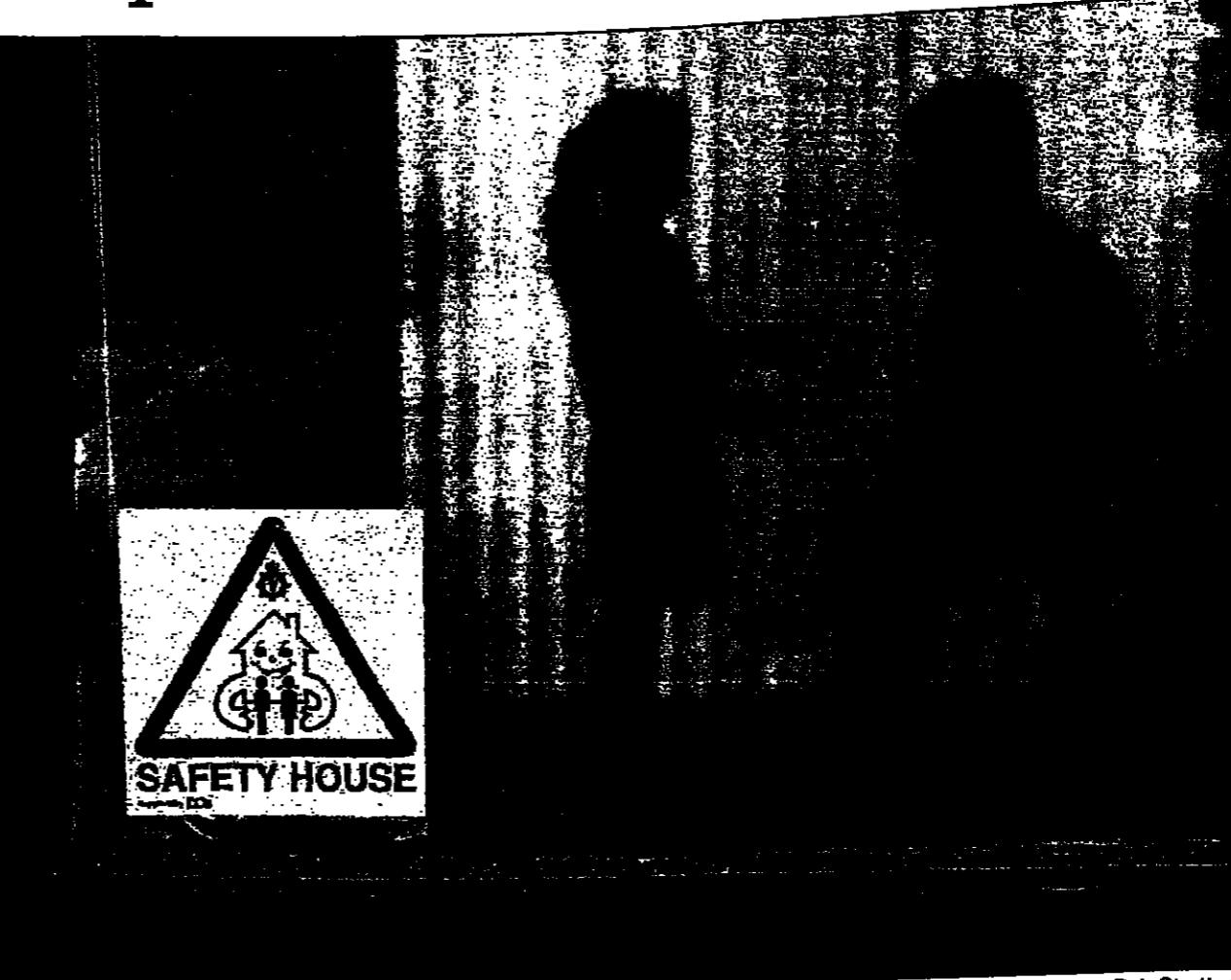
Later, although he was about 10 feet away from her, she started screaming "Help, help, he's beating me" and calling out for a neighbour.

Mr Ashby says the article about him in the *Sunday Times* in January 1994 alleged that he was a homosexual, who had misled Mrs Ashby about the nature of his sexuality, that he had lied to the public about having an affair with a Dr Ciaran Kilduff; and that he was a hypocrite in emphasising the importance of the family in his last election address.

Times Newspapers Ltd and the former *Sunday Times* editor Andrew Neil deny libel, although they accept that Mr Ashby did not holiday with a man in Goa. They assert he was and is carrying on an affair with Dr Kilduff.

The case continues.

Help for children is safe as houses



Help point: A window sticker identifying one of the 'safe houses' for children needing help. Photograph: Rob Stratton

VICKY WARD

Parents in the Cardiff suburbs of St Mellons and Llanrumney have been asked to join a new police scheme to provide "safe houses" for children under threat on the streets.

The scheme is a replica of a system used in Australia since 1979. It was introduced to the neighbourhood by local policeman Brian Tucker, who lived in Australia for eight years.

The 30 parents so far involved have yellow stickers displayed prominently in their windows. They bear a black triangle and a humanised house, hugging two children. The words "Safety House" are underneath.

The idea is to signal to children who may be feeling threatened, followed or just even sick," says Gail Lloyd, a nurse with two children who was one of the first to sign up. "I want to treat other children as I hope other parents would treat mine if they were in trouble."

Though crime is not bad in the area, residents were shaken by the discovery of the body of 15-year-old Claire Hood in nearby woods in January. "They haven't caught the person who did it," Ms Lloyd said.

The police are prepared for teething troubles. "We make very sure that no unauthorised person gets hold of a sticker," says PC Tucker.

Police seek help from gays over murder in park

JASON BENNETT

Crime Correspondent

The naked and beaten body of a businessman on a trip to Liverpool was found in a park used by gays for sex, it was revealed yesterday.

Merseyside police yesterday appealed to the city's gay community to help in the investigation. Detectives believe that Gordon Miller, 36, may have been a victim of an anti-gay attack or could have been set upon by robbers as he took a short cut back to his hotel.

He was found in St John's Gardens on Monday morning. He died from a half of blows to his head and face from a blunt object, which has not been recovered. His jeans and shirt were wrapped around his head, but an expensive watch, credit cards and some money were not taken. There was no indication of sexual assault.

Police said yesterday that Mr Miller had a girlfriend in Oxford and there was no evidence he was homosexual.

Nevertheless, he was killed in a park that was a known area for gay "cruising", and members of the homosexual community fear this could be the latest incident of "gay bashing". More

than a third of gay men and women – and half of those aged under 18 – have been victims of homophobic violence in the past five years, according to a new national survey. Earlier this month, three teenagers were charged with murder and attempted murder after an alleged attack on two men in a Plymouth park.

Mr Miller, an accounts manager from Oxford, had arrived in Liverpool on Sunday evening for a business meeting the following morning. He checked into the Adelphi Hotel, which is close to St John's Gardens, and left his room at about 8pm.

The small park, in an attractive part of the city, is used as a short cut between the business sector and an area of shops and bars. Police say there have not been any previous reports of attacks taking place in the park, although people are notoriously reluctant to report anti-homosexual assaults.

Detectives believe Mr Miller may have been one of three men seen arguing violently at about midnight on Sunday. Chief Inspector Frank Thompson, who is in charge of the investigation, said: "It may be that this is a one-off and he was in the wrong place at the wrong time."

DAILY POEM

The faint stars said

By Kathleen Raine

*The faint stars said,
Of distances of night,
These wastes of space,
Sight can in an instant cross.*

*But who has passed
On soul's dark flight
Journeys beyond
The flash of our light.*

*I said, Whence he is travelling
Let no heart's grief of mine
Draw back a thought
To these dim skies.*

*Nor human tears
Drench those wings that pass,
Freed from earth's weight
And the wheel of stars.*

Kathleen Raine was born in London in 1908 and spent much of her childhood in Northumberland. She read Natural Sciences at Girton College, Cambridge, in the 1930s and published the first of ten volumes of poetry, *Stone and Flower*, in 1943. Her *Collected Poems* were published in 1981. She is, in essence, a metaphysical poet, concerned with abstract ideas of time and eternity. As a literary critic, she is particularly noted for her Blake scholarship. "The faint stars said" is the introductory poem of her longest sequence poem *On a Deserted Shore*, first published in 1973, and recently republished by Agenda Press (5 Cranbourne Court, Albert Bridge Road, London SW11 4PE, telephone 0171 228 0700).

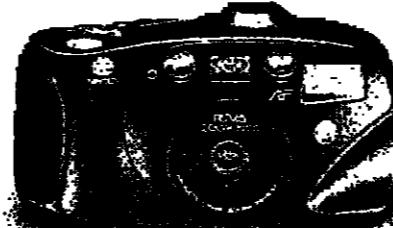
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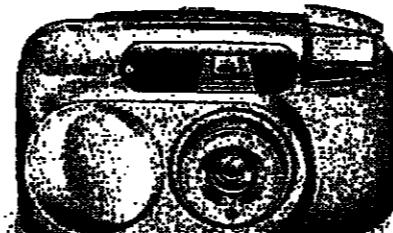
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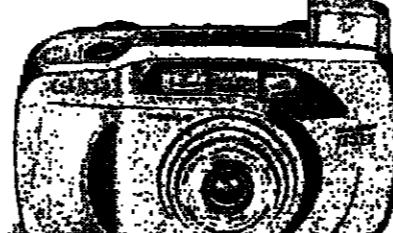
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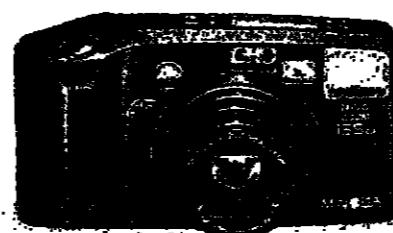
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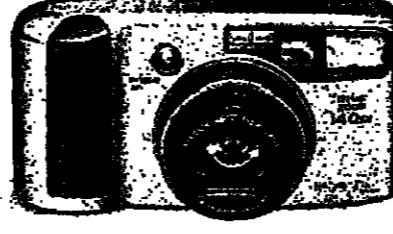
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Industry carpeted as pollution poses fresh threat to otter

JOHN MCKIE

The River Stour runs through Kidderminster, the carpet-manufacturing capital of Britain. People used to say that the river ran pink or blue, depending on which carpet dye was running in it at the time.

But that was in the halcyon era of carpet manufacturing 20 years ago when Kidderminster employed one in three of Britain's 45,000 carpet workers.

A great deal has happened since then. The carpet industry has had to meet various environmental requirements, dealing with threats posed by moth-proofing, toxic waste and chemical problems with dyes poured in the river. Kidderminster at present employs around 5,000 in the carpet industry—about one in two of the country's total.

Now the industry is under fire again. With Kidderminster's River Stour and huge carpet industry, the National Rivers Authority last week labelled it a "particular problem area".

Environmentalists are concerned that dyed wool which has been infected by sheep dip is



In danger: The Midlands is a 'black hole' for otters

ending up in the river producing diazinon, a highly toxic pesticide, which pollutes the river.

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust has called the Stour "a black hole" for endangered otters. The creatures, which threatened to become extinct about 15 years ago, were appearing with greater frequency but the pesticides have changed that.

Mr Fraser told of the deaths of two otters recently in the Stour, and added that many more risk perishing in the Stour as they try to travel to the Avon or the Thames.

"Our concern is that the Midlands is acting like a black hole because the pollutants are too strong for them to sustain a viable breeding population."

The NRA and water authorities are the first to admit that the carpet manufacturers have done much to meet environmental requirements.

But some, including Hugh Wilson, director of the British Carpet-Manufacturing Association, feel that change is being ordered for the sake of change. "The wool yarn is not perfect but it's nowhere as bad as it used to be. The problem is that the authorities tend to think of figures and then force us to meet those figures."

Some carpet firms in Kidderminster now import dyed wool but others feel indignant that enough progress has been made. Frank Wilson, of Tomkinsons Carpets, said: "The NRA recently commented to us on the quality of the Stour."



Dirty business: Environmentalists say the River Stour is polluted by waste wool

Government wastage on office space put at £100m

COLIN BROWN
Chief Political Correspondent

Empty government office space, equivalent to nearly two Canary Wharf towers or 70 Wembley stadium pitches, is costing the taxpayer £100m a year.

The disclosure will be an embarrassment for the Chancellor after his demands for cuts in roads, social security, and other government programmes to fund Budget tax cuts.

Around 700,000 square metres of office space are vacant. Some of the offices which ministers have moved to are in the luxury class. The merger of the Departments of Employment and Education has released one building in Victoria Street, but, relatively speaking, the new Education and Employment HQ makes many school buildings look almost derelict.

The Department of Environment is planning to vacate the Marsham Street towers, for a newer building near Victoria Street with a handsome glass entrance which critics have dubbed "John Gummer's tomato greenhouse".

The former Cabinet minister John Redwood said: "Who said cutting public expenditure is always difficult when there is the equivalent of 7 million square metres of office space around. It must be worth a capital value of £1bn. That would make a very nice contribution to tax cuts."

Mr Redwood, the right-wing challenger for the leadership against John Major this summer, staked his demand for tax cuts by demonstrating that much of his £5bn alternative Budget programme could be provided by cutting out waste.

The empty office space includes two former MI6 buildings, one at Curzon Street, Mayfair, which has now been sold, and the other at Waterloo, now for sale on the commercial property market, vacated by the secret services for a lavish new office at Vauxhall Bridge; and the Alexander Fleming House tower-block, designed by

Erno Goldfinger, at Elephant and Castle, which has stood empty for years, after being vacated by the former Department of Health and Social Security.

Negotiations over the lease are nearing completion for it to be handed back to the landlord.

Ashdown House, in Victoria Street, Westminster, is also vacant after the Department of Trade and Industry moved to a newer office in the same street.

The DTI has several offices in the Victoria Street area. A former Energy Department office with a glittering atrium in Palace Street is still held by the DTI and is being taken over by another department.

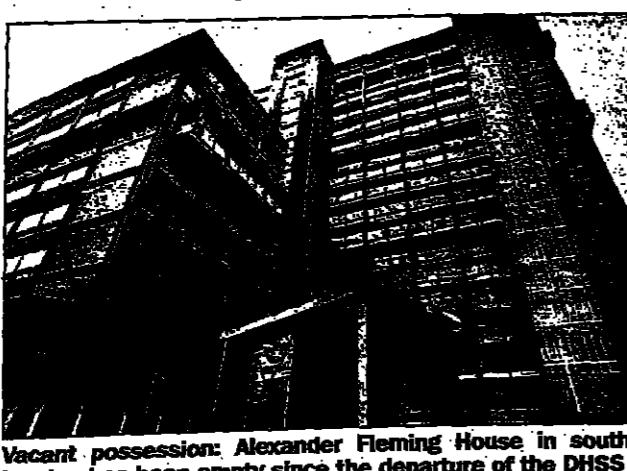
The Government's target for disposing of empty property was missed last year. It had aimed to reduce the amount of empty space to about 7.8 per cent of its estate, but it has risen to 10 per cent.

The Department of Environment which controls the estate confirmed that about 10 per cent of the 7 million sq metres of total office space owned by the government was still vacant.

A spokesman for the DoE said the target of £44m from sales of property had been exceeded, and much of the empty rented space was "at the poorer end of the market".

One reason for the failure of the Government to meet its disposal target is a change in rules next April, under which individual departments will become responsible with their own budgets for their offices.

Some departments have sought to lighten their burden by surrendering offices and passing the buck to the "Next Steps" agency, which will take over responsibility for disposing of government offices. As part of Treasury demands for savings, Whitehall departments, including Environment, Transport and Trade and Industry, are carrying out a rationalisation of office space, saving an estimated £25m a year through surrender or disposal of 20 buildings accounting for more than 175,000 sq metres in central London.



Vacant possession: Alexander Fleming House in south London has been empty since the departure of the DHSS

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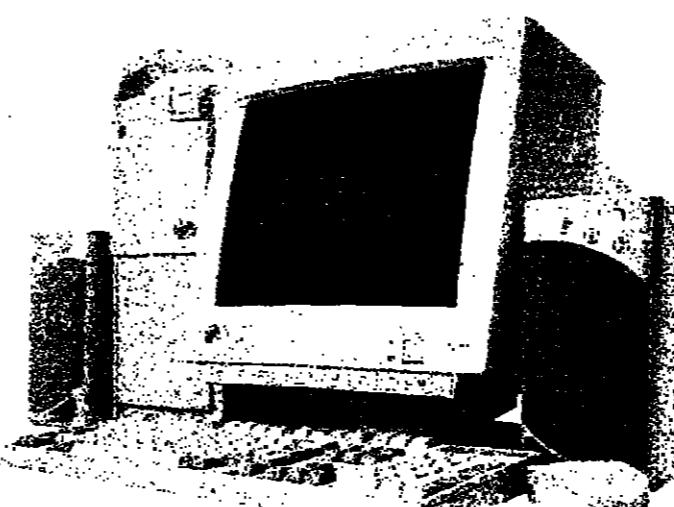
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Burns Festival in chaos after organiser flees



Eric Rowe: Gone missing

Cash crisis and rumours plunge poet's bicentenary celebrations into disarray, reports John Arlidge

A festival marking the 200th anniversary next year of the death of Scotland's national poet, Robert Burns, has been plunged into chaos after the chief organiser suddenly fled his home amid claims that the bicentenary celebration faced a cash crisis.

Eric Rowe, a councillor in Ayrshire where Burns was born, left his home abruptly several weeks ago. He later wrote to directors of the Burns International Festival Company telling them that he had resigned his post as chairman. His wife, Elizabeth, will not discuss his whereabouts, but friends say he has given up everything and moved in with another woman at her home in Essex.

Mr Rowe's departure has left festival organisers struggling to raise more than £100,000 in the six weeks before the bicentenary year begins. Before he disappeared, Mr Rowe was criticised for failing to secure the £1m sponsorship that the festival needs.

Many Burnsians privately



Sorting it out: John Struthers, director of the festival, with a painting of the poet by Alexander Nasmyth

relish the disarray because during his lifetime the bard himself was famous for his poverty and torrid relationships with women. During one affair Burns even planned to flee, not to Essex, but to Jamaica. One writer, who belongs to a Burns society in Ayrshire, said: "This crisis couldn't have happened to a more deserving or appropriate festival. Burns was forever in debt and running off with the lasses. It adds a little spice – and more than a little realism – to the whole affair."

After Mr Rowe's disappear-

ance organisers insisted that they would "work hard to ensure that the festival is a great success". But last week matters went from bad to worse when the main event of the year collapsed. Plans to stage the world's biggest Burns Night Supper on his birthday, 25 January – with Scots enjoying haggis and a dram at tables around the world, all linked by satellite television – were abandoned when talks with the satellite company broke down. Now a single supper will be held in a Glasgow hotel.

Moreover, some literary critics have begun to cast doubt on the quality of the events. The official programme has still not been published but organisers confirm that few international stars have so far been signed up. Fears are growing that hoteliers in Kilmarnock and Ayr, who are preparing for an influx of up to 200,000 visitors predicted to spend some £4m, could be disappointed.

Despite all the setbacks, Mr Rowe's successors refuse to be too downhearted. They insist that negotiations with new

sponsors are "at an advanced stage". They predict that agreements to secure the remaining £100,000 will be signed in the next few weeks.

John Struthers, the former director of the Exeter and Devon Arts Centre who has the job of clearing up the mess, admits that mistakes have been made.

"The festival has had tremendous problems," he said. "In hindsight, we should have started things like fundraising earlier. But then this festival has never been held before. And when it is held again in 100

years' time, those things will be put right."

Some people, however, remain unimpressed. One local writer told the *Independent*: "It is extraordinary that things have been left so late. We don't even have a programme yet. Everyone knows that Burns died in 1796. Two-hundred years should have been enough time for everyone to get their act together, but they haven't."

Mr Struthers said last weekend that the festival programme would be published next month.

Photograph: Jeremy Sutton Hibbert

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Baby's records 'falsified'

A nurse has been sacked for altering records about a seriously ill baby who died after being turned away from a hospital which has no full-time doctors. It was disclosed yesterday.

Maureen Thompson, a staff nurse at Berwick-upon-Tweed Infirmary, Northumberland, for 14 years, was dismissed after a disciplinary panel ruled that Ms Thompson rewrote and falsified entries on the casualty card and also tried to destroy original documentation.

Cheviot and Wansbeck NHS Trust said in a statement it was considered that her actions constituted gross professional misconduct. Ms Thompson, who has 21 days in which to appeal, was not making any comment.

Berwick Infirmary is 50 miles from the nearest large hospital but does not have full-time medical staff as the authorities consider there is too low a patient flow to justify it.

When Gordon and Angela Smith took 11-month-old Ryan, who was born with a heart defect, to the infirmary on 3 October they were told to take him to the GP's surgery, where he died – although an inquiry said he would probably have died even if he was treated at the hospital.

THE TIMES ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF EUROPE

GREEK TRAGEDY

FRENCH FARCE

BALKAN DRAMA

ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF EUROPE

BY ANNE FERNANDEZ-ARMSTRONG

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JULY 10 1995

Clinton swings US behind peace force

RUPERT CORNWELL
Washington

Praised by political foes as well as friend, President Bill Clinton's speech on Bosnia seems to have begun to nudge a sceptical public here towards support for sending 20,000 American servicemen to help keep a precarious peace in the Balkans.

With the first few hundred US troops due in Bosnia next week, a poll taken immediately after Mr Clinton's prime-time televised address on Monday night showed 46 to 40 per cent in favour of US participation in the Nato mission – hardly a resounding vote of confidence, but an improvement on the solid majorities against direct US involvement before last week's successful conclusion to the Dayton peace talks.

Better still from the White House point of view, as Mr Clinton

tions could spread like poison, eat away at Europe's stability and erode our partnership with our European allies."

But the two most important Republicans took a far more conciliatory line than Mr Buchanan. Hinting that the Senate could even give an explicit vote of support for Mr Clinton, Bob Dole called the speech a "good start" at making the case for sending troops. "I want to find a way to support the President," said Mr Dole, doubtless not unmindful that as front-runner for the Republican nomination, he could find himself wrestling with the problem from the Oval Office less than 14 months hence.

Speaker Newt Gingrich also left open the possibility he could back the President, saying his mind was open and that America should not miss a chance of bringing a durable peace to the Balkans. Even the Senate's most authoritative opponent of US deployment, the Arizona Republican, John McCain, had kind words for Mr Clinton, though he complained the President had failed to set out a clear "exit strategy" for the Nato force.

In fact, Mr Clinton merely repeated that the US mission would last no more than a year. He acknowledged that commitment of troops "would well involve casualties", for which he would take full responsibility. But the US force would be more than capable of looking after itself. Anyone who took them on would suffer the consequences, the President warned. "We will fight fire with fire. And then some."

Nato's final draft plan will be submitted to Mr Clinton this week. Assuming his approval, the White House will immediately thereafter seek the formal support of Congress. In the meantime between 500 and 700 US advance troops will go to Bosnia. The main contingent will arrive after formal signature of the peace accord in Paris in mid-December.

That rationale was summed up by just one paragraph of the President's sombre 20-minute address from the Oval Office: "If we're not there, Nato will not be there." he said. "The peace will collapse. The war will reignite. The slaughter of the innocents will begin again. A conflict that already has claimed so many vic-



Photograph: AP

Clinton: 'If we're not there, Nato will not be there'

ion began consultations yesterday with a wary Congress, the reaction from the Republicans who matter most suggested he might yet win bipartisan political cover for an enterprise that could cost American lives.

Predictable holdouts remained – most notably the conservative challengers for the party's 1996 Presidential nomination, like Senator Phil Gramm of Texas who vowed to "stand up and fight the President's efforts". Pat Buchanan, the conservative commentator and self-appointed mouthpiece of American isolationism, dismissed the entire rationale of the mission as "Utopian".

That rationale was summed up by just one paragraph of the President's sombre 20-minute address from the Oval Office: "If we're not there, Nato will not be there." he said. "The peace will collapse. The war will reignite. The slaughter of the innocents will begin again. A conflict that already has claimed so many vic-

Ministers forge Moscow's role in Nato

SARAH HELM
Brussels

William Perry, the US Defense Secretary, and Pavel Grachev were meeting at Nato headquarters in Brussels last night to discuss how to give Russia a degree of political control over the Nato-led force which is expected to head for the former Yugoslavia.

Nato leaders agreed a deal with Russia two weeks ago which will enable Russian forces

to serve alongside the Nato troops. However, the issue of political control of the force was deferred until the results of the peace conference at Dayton, Ohio were known.

The US has insisted that control should rest with the North Atlantic Council (NAC), which consists of Nato's 16 ambassadors and is the Alliance's main policymaking forum. Washington has refused to consider granting any control to the United Nations – where Russia

holds a seat on the Security Council – arguing that a single command structure is of overriding importance.

Russia, however, wants a wider command system than Nato is suggesting, and the two sides were yesterday considering giving Russia a liaison role alongside the NAC.

Mr Perry suggested yesterday that one solution might be for Vitaly Churkin, Moscow's ambassador to Brussels, to take an advisory role at Nato head-

quarters during the peace enforcement operation. President Clinton is determined that the force should come under overall command of US generals, knowing that otherwise he might lose his battle to convince Congress to commit 20,000 US troops to the force.

"What we will be discussing is ways in which Russia can have a voice on the NAC without being on the NAC," said Mr Perry before beginning yesterday's discussion with the Russian

Defence Minister. "There are a number of ways of doing that and I hope we can find a formula by which they can participate."

A Russian general is to be attached to the US commander in charge of the operation, General George Joulwan.

But General Joulwan, who is also Nato's Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, will consult on operations involving the Russians in his capacity as a US general.

CHILDREN OF WAR APPEAL

The *Independent* is asking readers to support four charities working to help child victims of the wars in former Yugoslavia:

Save the Children is focusing its efforts on children who have been separated from their families, counselling and reuniting them;

The Red Cross is running the largest humanitarian operation in the region, looking after refugee camps and linking people through its famous messaging network;

War Child plans to build a £2.5m music therapy centre in Mostar, and to send urgently needed prosthetics to wounded children in the Tuzla area;

Child Advocacy International aims to bring up to 100 sick children to Britain for treatment they could not obtain at home.

Please make your cheques or postal orders payable to the charity of your choice and send them to us with the completed coupon.

So far the *Independent's* appeal has raised £22,000 and led to a ventilator being donated to the Kosovo Hospital in Sarajevo by the Northwick Park Hospital in Harrow.

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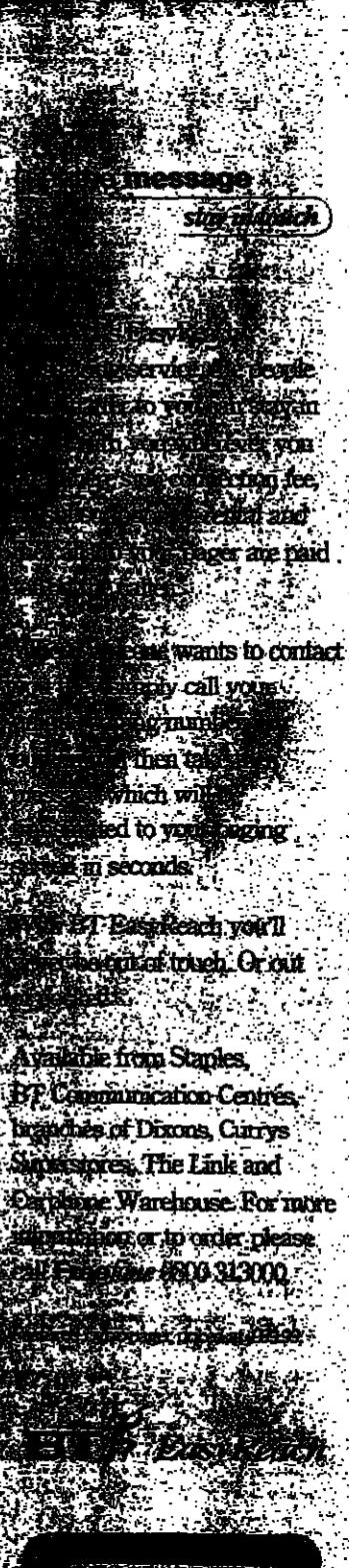
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Nation waits as Papandreu weakens

ANDREW GUMBLE

The anxious vigil surrounding Andreas Papandreu as he fights for his life in an Athens clinic turned grimly pessimistic yesterday as the Greek Prime Minister, who had seemed to be making steady progress following an attack of pneumonia, was hooked up to a kidney dialysis machine for the second time in 12 hours.

Attention in every area of Greek public life turned exclusively towards the Onassis Cardiac Surgery Clinic, the state-of-the-art hospital where Mr Papandreu, 76, has been in intensive care for the past nine days. Although he has come off the artificial respirator which

sustained him for most of last week, the malfunction in his kidneys bodes ill for a man who was already extremely weak before his admission to hospital and has been unable to ingest solids since.

Although official bulletins continued to be upbeat, ministers and close aides who visited him yesterday emerged looking grave and refusing to comment. Hundreds of well-wishers joined crowds of reporters outside the clinic. Political analysts could only confirm what the prevailing atmosphere already unmistakably suggested: that whether he lives or dies, this must surely be the end of the long and distinctive Papandreu era.

It is a measure of the unique

grip that the Prime Minister holds over Greek public life that from the moment he entered hospital the country effectively entered hospital with him. The government has all but ground to a halt, while television news has focused exhaustively on medical bulletins and on the hundreds of ministers, members of parliament, churchmen, business leaders and personal friends who have paid homage to a man who has dominated Greek life for the past 15 years.

Magdi Yacoub, the British surgeon who performed a triple bypass on Mr Papandreu at Harefield Hospital, Cambridgeshire, in 1988, has been in constant touch and sent special medication to keep the Prime Minister's heart stable.

Exercises strict control over

who is allowed to see him. The peculiar closeness of the private and public domains of Mr Papandreu's life has come all too conspicuously to the fore; thus his Health Minister, Dimitris Kremastinos, has taken up his secondary role as the Prime Minister's personal physician, directing a team of medical experts that has swelled to 17 doctors of international renown.

Tabloid newspapers, meanwhile, have recounted how holy oil has been flown in from the island of Tinos and rubbed over Mr Papandreu's body, and how his wife has placed golden Orthodox crosses on

his chest. Mimi is known to have an interest in astrology, and fortune-tellers have been quoted as warning that the last 10 days of November are particularly inauspicious in Mr Papandreu's star chart.

More seriously, the movers and shakers in Pasok, the Socialist party Mr Papandreu founded 21 years ago, have been quietly meeting behind the scenes to plan scenarios for the succession. Although little has been said openly, it now looks increasingly likely that Mr Papandreu will stand aside. The only question, political sources say, is whether the Prime Minister will recover sufficiently to make his own nomination for the leadership.



Papandreu: His illness has brought government to a halt

Mr Arsenis may be the only person to command the respect needed to hold Pasok together. If Mr Papandreu dies or decides to stand down, it will be up to Pasok's parliamentary party to nominate a successor. It remains to be seen if they can do so without tearing each other apart.

Protests throw Juppé off balance

MARY DEJEVSKY

Paris

With much of France's transport at a standstill, schools closed, many universities on strike and postal and other services crippled, the French government yesterday held a series of emergency meetings to consider its response to a wave of unrest for which it was largely unprepared.

The protests, which have a variety of causes, have coalesced against the plans of the Prime Minister, Alain Juppé, to reform the health and social security system, attaining a strength that has surprised even the most militant of trade-union leaders.

Yesterday's day of protest, the second within a week, had been called by France's second largest union, the Force Ouvrière, as a direct response to the social security reforms, and involved mainly public sector workers objecting to likely cuts in their pension rights. It followed the nationwide strikes and demonstrations called last Friday by France's six other big unions.

Yesterday, too, members of the other unions, including the CGT, with members concentrated in France Télécom and other public services, joined the FO in declaring a day-long

strike. More than 20,000 marched through Paris, bringing the remains of public transport to a halt.

While this march was slightly less well supported than Friday's turnout of up to 50,000 in Paris and thousands more in other big cities, yesterday was the first real working day to be affected by strike action — on Friday, many people simply took the day off — and the disruption was considerable.

With almost no suburban trains running and the national railways on strike for the fifth day running (over a restructuring plan), queues of 30 to 40km built up on many approach roads to Paris. The inner ring road was blocked from 7.30am. Cross-Channel ferry services were again disrupted as French crews on the Calais-Dover route went on strike.

So far, ministers have made no comment on the protests. Mr Juppé made it clear at the outset that he had no intention of withdrawing his social security plans. Speaking to representatives of small business in Bordeaux on Monday, he ignored the transport difficulties many of his audience had faced.

In this case, however, waiting to see whether the unions, particularly public-sector workers,

can sustain their protests may be less a sign of government confusion than a reasonable policy option. As Franz-Olivier Giesbert, the chief editorial writer of the pro-Chirac *Figaro* said yesterday, the government's position, and Mr Juppé's own, may not be as weak as it seems at first sight, or even as weak as it was a few weeks ago.

"He gives the impression of having something to fight for now. Like Reagan and Kohl before him, he waited to be unpopular before trying to impose his reforms," said Mr Giesbert, noting that Mr Juppé's personal stake in the social security reform was not just a weakness, but also a strength.

The government could also profit from the confused nature of the conflict. While the two days of protests have been called in the name of the social security system, each group is also fighting its own corner: hospital workers against reforms, France Télécom workers against privatisation, lecturers and students against overcrowding, public servants in support of their pensions, and railway workers against restructuring.

This diversity of interest makes the disruption spectacular while it lasts, but could also hold the seeds of its failure.



Own goal: Bernard Tapie, the former politician and chairman of Olympique Marseille football club, leaves an appeal court in Douai, northern France yesterday, after having a conviction upheld for his part in fixing a match between his club and Valenciennes in 1993. Photograph: Reuter

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IN BRIEF

Suu Kyi misses out

Rangoon — Aung San Suu Kyi's political party, the National League for Democracy, attended the reopening of Burma's constitutional convention. A week ago, she had threatened to boycott it. Eighty-four NLD representatives were among 631 delegates at the convention's first session after a seven-month recess.

Ms Suu Kyi was not present. The military government has barred her from resuming her post as NLD secretary-general and, since she was under house arrest during the 1990 election, she is not an elected representative. *AP*

Japan cuts forces

Tokyo — Japan's Cabinet yesterday adopted a new defence outline that calls for slimming down the military, but expanding its roles in anti-terrorism and disaster relief operations. The outline calls for efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons and reaffirms the importance of the defence alliance with the United States.

More contentious phrasings on maintaining Japan's arms export ban and calls for reducing US troops in Okinawa were not included in the main outline, and were shunted off to a separate non-binding statement by the chief Cabinet secretary. *AP*

Mother's pride

Peking — The mother of Tibetan Buddhism's Panchen Lama has rejected the exiled Dalai Lama's choice of her dead son's reincarnation, Tibet's official Chinese newspaper said. An edition of the *Tibet Daily* seen in Peking yesterday trumpeted "Buddha mother" Yang Suelangzhuoma's desire that a controversial Peking-directed search be allowed to identify the next Panchen Lama, the region's number two lama. *Reuters*

Nader weighs in

San Francisco — Consumer advocate Ralph Nader entered the US presidential race this week, saying he will take part in the Green Party of California's primary next year. *Reuters*

Language curb

Bratislava — The Slovak President Michal Kovac has signed a controversial language law, making Slovak the only state language and over-riding previous laws on the languages of the minorities. *Reuters*

Boxer under fire finds safety under the ring

Steve Brenkley

BRITISH boxer Warren Stowe is holed up in a South African hotel. He is watching television for most of the day and emerging only as far as the restaurant. Venturing anywhere else is out of the question. Mr Stowe is not of a mind to take the slightest risk to his well-being after his fight in Cape Town on Sunday night was abruptly halted by gunfire.

"I thought they were shooting at me," he said yesterday. "That's all that kept going through my mind when I saw what was happening just 10 metres away from where I was fighting. People now keep suggesting to me that I should go outside, go down to the harbour. They reckon there are safe areas but I don't know where they are or what I might have to get through to get to them. I'm not risking anything. I just want to get home but till the car comes to take me to the airport, I'm staying put."

Stowe's middleweight bout with South African champion Simon Maseko was entering its eighth round when the sound of shots pierced that of the legitimate violence at the Guguletu sports centre. A cashier died during the raid from which

four robbers fled empty-handed.

"My trainer told me to get down but I thought I'd do better than that. I leapt through the ropes, realised there was nowhere to go and got under the ring. Even when the police arrived I felt intimidated when I was escorted straight out of the place to the car. Hundreds of people were round it."

Stowe, 30, took the fight because of Maseko's status as champion and in the hope it might give him a chance of a fight for the British middleweight title sometime next year. He will not be returning until Friday to the home he shares in Rochdale with his girlfriend Toni and three-year-old daughter Kate.

"People have been fine at the hotel but this is an impossible place to feel comfortable in. It's been a useful experience for me but I've never been in a situation like this before."

The boxer in him still prevails. While he has turned down an offer to finish his fight with Maseko this Saturday, he is anxious to meet him again.

"I think I'd just go on top again when the shots came. I wouldn't jump at the chance of coming to South Africa for it but in the end I suppose I would. It all comes down to the money."

Stowe: still uncomfortable

Photograph: *Reuters*

Poll risks Belarus democracy

PHIL REEVES

Moscow

Citizens of the former Soviet republic of Belarus go to the polls today for scores of parliamentary by-elections, knowing that the outcome could prompt their President, Alexander Lukashenko, to impose direct rule.

It is a prospect that the democrats among them will not relish, given Mr Lukashenko's increasingly dictatorial and eccentric behaviour, including making glowing remarks about Adolf Hitler.

The 16 months in which Mr Lukashenko, a former Communist-era state farm director, has brashly reigned over the 10 million people of the country suggests that he has less than a complete commitment to democracy. *Reuters*

Belarus at a specific stage. Germany was at one point raised from ruins, thanks to strong power," he said.

Although he condemned Hitler for launching the Second World War, Mr Lukashenko showed little sensitivity to the suffering inflicted on Belarus, where a quarter of the population died in the Nazi onslaught.

Today's by-elections are in 141 districts where elections last May were declared invalid because of a failure to meet the minimum turn-out. He has decided to impose direct rule if the elections are invalid again.

"Absolute power, absolute responsibility, and I am ready for this," he announced this week. He is certainly well equipped: Belarus has 1,800 tanks and nearly 300 tactical aircraft. It also has a nuclear arsenal.

JPY 1 in 1.50

Egyptian elections: Campaign against Muslim Brotherhood has outraged liberals and embarrassed American government

Mubarak threatens to make victims into heroes

ROBERT FISK
Cairo

Is President Mubarak a frightened man? Given the mass arrests that have preceded today's Egyptian parliamentary elections, the police intimidation and the sentencing last week of 54 non-violent members of the Muslim Brotherhood, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the man who has ruled Egypt for almost a decade and a half no longer trusts his own electorate.

For what might have been a mundane election, won as usual by Mr Mubarak's acolytes in his National Democratic Party, has been transformed over the past few days into a battle between the government and those Egyptians who wish for a transition to a more Islamic state. By harassing the technically illegal but hitherto toler-

ated Muslim Brotherhood –

who are fielding up to 150 candidates in the elections – the Mubarak government has outraged Egyptian liberals and deeply embarrassed an American government which has advocated human rights as the cornerstone of democracy in the Middle East.

Quite apart from last week's trials before Egyptian military courts in which 54 of 80 Muslim Brotherhood defendants – including doctors and lawyers, none of whom advocated violence – were sentenced to imprisonment and hard labour for "holding secret meetings and preparing anti-government meetings", Egyptian police have now arrested at least 400 Brotherhood supporters in Cairo. Many of them turn out to be Brotherhood "party agents", officially recognised witnesses who are allowed to observe

the voting at polling stations to ensure that the election is fair.

All have to submit their names and addresses to the authorities in advance of the poll. No sooner had they done so at the weekend, however, than the police arrested many of them. The government's action came only hours after a Brotherhood election rally in Cairo led by Mahrous Odeh had been surrounded by the police – the organisers allegedly broke the law by using loudspeakers who forced 400 supporters into trucks and took them away for temporary detention.

Officially, Egypt's parliamentary elections are not run on party lists. Candidates stand as independents and parties may endorse them as they see fit. Thus Mr Mubarak's NDP has endorsed 439 candidates in 444 constituencies – there are around 4,000 candidates in all

– while the Brotherhood are thought to have 150 candidates. As the semi-official *Al-Ahram* has pointed out, Mr Mubarak's men are going to win at least two-thirds of seats. So why the near-paranoid assault on those who were bound to lose – and at such cost to Egypt's boast that it is a democratic state?

One theory making the rounds in Cairo suggests that the President has been deeply troubled by Algeria's experience, when the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was poised to win parliamentary elections there in 1992, the military-backed regime suspended the poll to prevent what it claimed would be the creation of an Islamic Republic. The subsequent banning of the FIS led to a war in which 50,000 have died. Even if the Muslim Brotherhood may not be about to win the Egyptian elections, how much easier it

might be for President Mubarak to avoid claims of anti-democratic arrests after the election by accusing the Brotherhood now of attempting to subvert government authority.

Clearly, Mr Mubarak has good reason to be a worried man. The bomb attack on the Egyptian embassy in Islamabad last week, in which 15 diplomats and guards were killed, came only five months after an equally ruthless attempt to murder the President in Addis Ababa. In both cases, the armed Islamic Jihad group claimed responsibility – and last week, it specifically named Mr Mubarak and his senior ministers as targets for future assassination. The Egyptian government was infuriated, not least because it had been bragging for months that its campaign against the armed Islamists had almost wiped out their enemies inside Egypt.

Unfortunately for Mr Mubarak, the Islamic Jihad again threatened the lives of foreigners and attacked two tourist trains in the Nile valley in upper Egypt. Even more ominously, last Thursday, the Egyptian police claimed they had arrested four men with a white Renault car containing 150 kilos of TNT in October full City outside Cairo. According to the police, the men intended to set off a car bomb in the Khan al-Khalili bazaar, a popular tourist attraction in Cairo.

So is President Mubarak striking at the soft underbelly of "terrorism" by harassing the Muslim Brotherhood, as he would like the world to believe? Or is he stifling the only semi-legitimate mouthpiece of those who oppose him and the corruption which has become so endemic a part of the Egyptian administration and bureaucracy?

Mubarak: Does he still trust his electorate?

debate... When they are seen as victims, this makes them heroes, even if they don't deserve being considered as heroes."

Although at least one American human-rights group condemned last week's military court convictions, the US embassy in Cairo – always a weather vane of Washington's approval or disapproval in Arab states – has remained silent.

Syria and Israel look like easing closer

PATRICK COCKBURN
Jerusalem

Are Israel and Syria slowly moving towards each other? Public diplomacy in Barcelona this week produced a less glacial tone than usual. Ehud Barak, the new Israeli Foreign Minister, speaking to his Syrian counterpart said: "We have been rivals on the battlefield, and shed the blood of our courageous soldiers, the finest sons of Israel and Syria. Let us now make peace."

Farouq al-Shara, the Syrian Foreign Minister, summoned members of his delegation and left the room to consult about their reply. When he returned he said Syria offered "full peace in return for full withdrawal" by Israel from the Golan Heights, captured in 1967. Mr Barak said the Syrian response contained "positive messages".

Such public diplomacy holds dangers. Both sides were on best behaviour in front of the media and leaders from 27 Mediterranean countries gathered in Barcelona. In particular, neither the Syrian nor the Israeli positions have changed. He says,

nevertheless, it is important to see what changes, if any, Shimon Peres, the new prime minister, makes in the Israeli position.

Syria, which offered no condolences to Israel over the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, will be asking itself the same question. It will also want to know more about Mr Barak. Chief-of-Staff of the Israeli army at the beginning of the year, he had already entered the cabinet as Interior Minister when the assassination of Mr Rabin on 4 November made him Foreign Minister. "Is Barak going to be a loyal lieutenant to Peres to obtain the succession as prime minister or will he carve his own political and military viewpoint?" Dr Gold asks.

The difficulty is that far more is involved than the Golan Heights, though resolving their future is complex enough. Israel is willing to withdraw – though the position of a new frontier line is unclear. Also in dispute is the extent of the pullback of troops. Israel wants 24-hour-a-day monitoring from ground stations – notably that on top of Mount Hermon – to prevent a surprise attack.

Israel says it needs early warning because Syria has a large standing army while the Israeli forces depend on reserves.

It also wants the Syrian army redeployed away from the Golan, with only limited forces south of Damascus.

All this may be too much for

President Hafez al-Assad of Syria to swallow. He is being asked to make more concessions than at first appear. Professor Gold believes the recovery of the Golan only ranks third in Syria's priorities, its first concern being its predominance in Lebanon and relations with the US. Syria also knows that the pay-off for the US in arranging an agreement is to get Damascus to break with Iran. Washington's prime enemy and President Assad's closest ally in the Middle East.

There is another Syrian worry. Can Mr Peres deliver? His Labour Party has already split on the Golan. A vote in the

Mediterranean trade deal clinched

ELIZABETH NASH
Barcelona

European and Mediterranean nations agreed an unprecedented common programme for peace and prosperity yesterday, promising to defuse conflict and promote trade throughout the region.

It remains unclear, however, to what extent these somewhat vague promises can be redeemed, especially the pledges to remove most trade barriers within 15 years.

Twenty-seven foreign ministers from Europe, North Africa and the Middle East ended the Euro-Mediterranean conference with an action plan promising a regional free-trade area by 2010 and co-operation on energy, water, immigration and drugs trafficking.

The Barcelona declaration fell short of what some nations had hoped for, but it marks an advance in uncharted diplomatic and commercial territories.

It was being compared yesterday to the dialogue on security and co-operation which was established between former Cold War countries by the Helsinki agreement.

The core of the Barcelona pact is the proposed free trade zone, intended to promote the prosperity of North African and Middle Eastern countries, seen as indispensable to curbing illegal immigration. The free trade area is to be created by detailed agreements yet to be negotiated, between the EU and the Mediterranean countries, and among Mediterranean countries themselves.

The Mediterranean countries will progressively open up to European trade and investment in return for what the document calls "a substantial increase in the European Union's financial aid to its partners". The EU will supply \$1.2bn (£800m) in aid and credits to the region over the next four years.

In effect, the poorer countries on Europe's southern flank will accept increased dominance by their richer northern neighbours as the price for economic growth. Agriculture, the Mediterranean's main export industry, received a more relaxed treatment in the push towards free trade, in deference to Mediterranean countries' fears that they would be blown away by northern competition.

The conference is the start of a process of regular meetings and initiatives, and it is on these that its success will be judged. More meetings are planned next year, and another assembly of foreign ministers is envisaged for 1997, probably in a non-European capital.

Spain's Foreign Minister, Javier Solana, who chaired the conference, stressed that no subject remained in dispute. It was, he said, the first time countries with outstanding disputes had unanimously approved a common document.

New Bond movie fails the dial-God test

DAVID USBORNE
New York

Go and see "Goldeneye", the new James Bond caper if you must, but avoid the latest crop of American mayhem movies such as Martin Scorsese's "Casino" and "Money Train" starring Wesley Snipes and Woody Harrelson. They will bankrupt your immortal soul.

This advice comes courtesy not of the regular film rating organisations but of the Catholic Church, which has jumped into the film reviewing business by way of a free telephone number

that is now available nationwide. Dial the number and you are invited to listen to mini-reviews or "capsules" on six new releases showing in US cinemas. You will hear a rapid description of each film and critical assessment, with heavy emphasis on moral content. Each release then receives a rating ranging from A1 (general patronage) to A4 (for adults, with reservations). Films considered beyond the pale receive a simple "O" (morally offensive).

"Goldeneye", which may become the most successful Bond film ever in the US, apparently

did not endear itself. The film is all sound and fury to the detriment of character and storyline", they said, awarding it an A4 but sparing it the big "O".

However, Bond got off comparatively lightly compared with some others. "Casino", starring Robert De Niro as a casino manager and Sharon Stone as his drugged-out wife, gets an instant "O" by the church, because of "much graphic violence, adulterous affairs, fleeting nudity, substance abuse and incessant rough language". "Money Train" was hit by controversy this week, when a

Knesset about a special majority for withdrawal was tied in the summer 59 votes to 59. This was with Mr Rabin as prime minister. Would a withdrawal be approved by the Knesset now and how would it be regarded by the Israeli electorate?

■ Marjayoun – Lebanese guerrillas fired Katyusha rockets on northern Israeli towns yesterday, wounding at least six people and forcing residents into bomb shelters, AP reports. Israel responded with artillery fire and an air raid on suspected strongholds of Hizbullah, the Iranian-backed guerrilla group that claimed responsibility for the rocket barrage.

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Quebec gets concessions from uneasy Canada

RANDALL PALMER
Reuters

Ottawa - Jean Chrétien, under pressure to prevent Canada from falling apart, has announced three measures aimed at stopping French-speaking Quebec from leaving the rest of the country.

The Prime Minister made his proposals on Monday night after suffering blistering attacks in Parliament and in the media for not moving soon after separatists came close to winning a referendum on 30 October.

"These three initiatives the government will undertake in the coming days are a tangible

give four regions a veto over any constitutional amendment - Quebec, Ontario, the Atlantic region and the Western region - thus meeting Quebec's demand to regain a constitutional veto without granting that right to Quebec alone.

Thirdly, the government would begin decentralising some of its functions, starting with getting out of the business of manpower training. "This is just the start of a process of change, not the outcome. What is important is that changes be innovative and realistic and respect the will of Canadians."

The separatists came within a percentage point of winning last month's referendum. A poll in Saturday's *Globe and Mail* said 54.8 per cent of Quebecers would vote to leave Canada if a vote were held now.

Since the referendum, the Bloc's charismatic leader, Lucien Bouchard, has said he would seek the premiership of Quebec, from which he could launch another referendum in a couple of years. Rejecting Mr Chrétien's proposals outright, Quebec's Ms Beaudoin said the distinct-society resolution was "just words" giving Quebec no real power and the proposals on worker training fell short of demands made by earlier Quebec governments.

Reaction from Quebec's Liberal Party leader, Daniel Johnson, who was official leader of Canadian unity forces during the referendum campaign, was reserved. Mr Johnson commended Mr Chrétien for taking a "first step", but added that a resolution adopted by Quebec Liberals on Sunday called for Quebec's distinct-society designation and veto to be entrenched in the constitution. That would give them much more political weight.

Michel Gauthier, the Bloc's No 2 called the veto proposal "completely senseless". The Reform Party said Mr Chrétien's policy was a rehash of past, failed ideas.



Call of the open road: The US Congress has lifted the 55mph speed limit, imposed during the 1970s oil crisis, freeing states to set their own rules. Photograph: Brian Harris



Chrétien: Three measures to hold Canada together

response to the desires expressed by my fellow Quebecers during the referendum campaign," Mr Chrétien said. The proposals were immediately blasted by the Parti Québécois government in Quebec, the Bloc Québécois, its separatist ally in the federal parliament, and the western Reform Party as unacceptable. "What we have on the table is clearly not enough," Louise Beaudoin, Quebec's intergovernmental affairs minister, told a Montreal news conference.

Mr Chrétien said government was introducing a motion in the Commons recognising Quebec as a distinct society with a French-speaking majority. A bill would be introduced to

Revisit Highway 61 and put your foot down

WASHINGTON DAYS

Fed up with speed limits and your inability to discover whether that snappy new roadster really does 110 mph? Well, drivers of the world, very soon you will have two places in which put such manufacturers' claims to the test, legally. One of course remains the autobahns of Germany. The other (much more scenic) will shortly be the great state of Montana, occupying an area greater than Germany but with one hundredth the population.

For this notable addition to the sum of human liberties, thank the US Congress which last week finally voted to do away with the 55mph federal speed limit. In its place, individual states will be free to set their own rules. And in the Big Sky Country, the sky will indeed be the limit. Tame those Cadillacs and Cherokees, Saabs and Jags and head for the Northern Plains, where an unspecified

"reasonable and prudent speed" will be the only constraint upon your pleasure.

Thus ends a great American anachronism, imposed back in 1974 to reduce oil consumption, when people made jokes about "Sheikh Yamani or Your Life". Open threatened an embargo and queues at petrol stations stretched for blocks.

These days oil prices are tumbling, and even Saudi Arabia is strapped for cash, while America guzzles imported oil with more abandon than ever. But in theory the country still chugs along at 55mph, except in rural areas where on major highways the limit was put up to 65 mph in 1987.

The operative words, of course, are "in theory". In my experience (and I speak as one who has co-existed with French, Italian, German and Russian drivers for some 20 years) Americans are pretty sensible about unchanging landscapes and

"cruise control", whereby you press a button to hold the car at a constant speed, and all too easily "virtual" driving can turn into real sleep.

Not surprisingly, the opposition to limits has always been strongest in the West where the distances are vast, the people few and dislike of federal government all-abiding. In crowded Eastern states, three speeding tickets can cost you your licence. Montana has a standard speeding fine of \$5, or £3, which officially describes as an "energy conservation ticket", the Big Sky Country's mocking obeisance to Sheikh Yamani and his ilk. In Nevada too, which plans to raise its limit to 75mph, there's no guff about "reckless endangerment" - just the vague offence of a "waste of natural re-

sources", and a \$15 fine. All in all, a dozen states have said they will either scrap or raise the limit to 70 or 75mph.

Conceivably of course Presi-

dent Bill Clinton could try to spoil the fun. He is known to favour retaining the current limits, not least because his own father died in a road crash before he was born, probably as a result of driving too fast in bad weather. But the repeal went through the House on the nod, and the Senate by 80 votes to 16, suggesting that a White House veto would be overruled in the flash of a passing Montana pick-up truck.

And consider the abject performance of the lobbies. Normally, on an issue such as speed limits, public safety and medical groups would be having a field day, with righteous press conferences, saturation advertising and zealous "call-your-Congressman" campaigns. But, as

tonishingly, all has fallen on deaf ears. Perhaps the campaigners have gone too far, and a country that lives by numbers has finally said enough to bombardment by dubious statistics.

The consumer protection guru, Ralph Nader, may warn of 6,400 more deaths and \$19bn a year in extra public health and related costs; but why not \$5bn, \$10bn, or \$30bn, and 2,000, 8,000 or 10,000 more lives lost (on top of the 45,000 who currently die in road accidents every year)?

The answer is, no one knows. More to the point, a federal speed limit runs full square against today's doctrine of handing responsibility back to the states. The public has simply had enough and so, I confess, have I - but with one proviso. Please put the brakes on those hellish trucks.

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Clinton shows true leadership

From a European perspective, President Bill Clinton's speech on Bosnia last Monday night rates as perhaps his finest foreign policy address in three years of office. His language was precise, his message was unmistakable. By the time he finished, he had succeeded in setting out not just a compelling case for sending US troops to Bosnia, but a convincing definition of long-term American interests in Europe. Senior Republicans in Congress, notably Senator Robert Dole, Mr Clinton's potential rival in next year's presidential election, were right to give a positive response to the speech and to suggest that they would no longer oppose the deployment of US soldiers in the Balkans.

The chief virtue of Mr Clinton's speech was that it recognised how much is at stake for the United States in Bosnia. It is not just a matter of the need to implement the peace agreement recently negotiated in Dayton, Ohio, though clearly the Clinton administration, having urged each side in the war to make a number of painful concessions, has a responsibility not to walk away and let the settlement unravel. The most important point made by Mr Clinton was that the Bosnian conflict, if left to fester, could "spread like poison throughout the region and eat away at Europe's stability and erode our partnership with our European allies".

The wars of the Yugoslav have placed this partnership under considerable strain in the past four years. The European Union, eager to prove its maturity in foreign policy and security matters, promised the US in 1991 that it would sort

out the mess in former Yugoslavia, and then failed to do so. At the same time, there were justified European complaints that the US was doing just enough to undermine European peace initiatives in the Balkans without committing the full resources of its diplomacy and military strength to a solution of the Yugoslav problem.

By late last year, mutual recriminations between the US and Europe had left Nato more divided than at any time since the fall of the Berlin Wall. It was vital to inject the alliance with a fresh sense of purpose, without which it might as well sink into post-Cold War obsolescence. Thankfully, the Western allies summoned the will last summer to do just that, and a short but effective bombing campaign against the Bosnian Serbs was followed by a determined effort to broker a definitive peace settlement before the end of this year. US leadership, however late in the day it arrived, proved absolutely essential during this period, but Mr Clinton was right to point out that all the hard work will come to nothing if the US pulls out now.

The coming 12 months will offer the US and Europe a chance to show that they can co-operate effectively in stabilising a part of the world that is notoriously treacherous for peace-makers. Setbacks can be expected, for the Oslo settlement leaves Serbs, Croats and Muslims alike dissatisfied in several important respects. However if one thing is certain it is that Bosnia would be an even more dangerous place without the presence of a US-led Nato force. Mr Clinton deserves praise for spelling that out.

Welcome to the world of Jesus plc

How endearingly behind the times we can always rely on the Church of England to be. After almost a decade of turmoil in bodies such as the BBC and the NHS, in which efficiency became the new watchword, the Church of England has finally decided to get in on the act and launch its own Birst revolution.

The Turnbull report into church governance, which the General Synod will discuss this week, addresses some real problems. There is no doubt of that. The Church Commissioners, under the hapless Sir Douglas Lovelock, lost £800m - a third of church funds - in the late Eighties with their unseemly foray into property speculation. And the Synod, with its hundred or so subcommittees, has laid itself open to uncharitable caricature in recent years with its endless successions of worthy motions reminiscent of a students' union in the early Seventies.

So is the report of the group chaired by the Bishop of Durham, Michael Turnbull, the answer? What it proposes is a national council, chaired by the Archbishop of Canterbury, which would set budgets, oversee the flow of money within the church, develop a comprehensive pensions policy and decide how many priests are needed. The whole top layer of the Synod will disappear.

Its critics are clear what this would mean. Trying to squeeze the church into the mould of a managed, product-driven organisation would bring about the "McDonaldisation" of religion - seeking

ever greater uniformity, predictability and control. They accuse the hierarchy of repeating mistakes by absorbing the values of its elite peer group and bringing in out-of-date management theories. Welcome to the wonderful world of Jesus plc.

The outside world tends to think of the Church of England as an organisation whereas, cynics might say, it is in reality a coalition of interests held together in an armed neutrality. More sympathetically, one might suggest that it is an organisation which needs to nurture its corporate spirituality as much as its managerial efficiency.

The problem with the Turnbull proposals is that they set out to address the issue of accountability and end up with an un-elected council that is accountable only to the church's own bureaucracy. The risk to the morale of the working clergy is clear. The church must find ways of becoming more efficient and which invigorate its rank and file rather than buttressing the power of the hierarchy.

That means a rethink rather than proceeding now with unseemly haste to a leisurely repentence. After all, the most successfully centrally-managed church around is that which has its corporate headquarters in Rome. The cost of such efficiency - both in the shadowy scandals that have in the past surrounded the unaccountable Vatican finances, and in the authoritarian hammering of dissenters - has been high indeed.

Clichés aren't what they used to be

There's a story called "William the Intruder" by the great Richmal Crompton which starts, as many of the William stories do, with elder brother Robert falling hopelessly in love with a girl. The opening dialogue between William and Robert about the girl has always appealed to me. It goes like this: "She's different from everybody else in the world," stammered Robert ecstatically. "You simply couldn't describe her. No one could!"

His mother continued to darn his socks and made no comment. Only William, his younger brother, showed interest.

"How's she different from anyone else?" he demanded. "Is she blind or lame or sunburnt?"

Robert turned on him with exasperation. "Oh, go and play at trains!" he said. "A child like you can't understand anything."

Now, the reason Robert got cross with William was not because William was being stupid or obtuse. It was because William was being intelligent. He was actually listening to what Robert was saying and reacting to the meaning of the words. This girl was different from everyone else, was she? Therefore she must have some amazing physical characteristic. It stands to reason.

But Robert didn't mean that at all. All he meant was that he was smitten.



MILES KINGTON

If Robert had thought about what he was saying, he would have noticed that every time he fell in love, he described the girl as the most wonderful girl in the world, and a moment's thought might have told him that they couldn't all be. In fact, only one could. But grown-ups don't think about what they are saying most of the time. They use bolt-on sentences to make conversation, automatic phrases that spring to mind like trusted licks which blues guitarists fall back on.

Here's an example. If people want to describe somebody as ultra-conservative, they don't call him ultra-conservative. They say that he is somewhere to the right of ... anyone? That's right! Somewhere to the right of Genghis Khan. Never to the right of Attila the Hun or Tamburlaine the Great, always Genghis Khan. Genghis Khan has now replaced Disgusted of

Timbridge Wells as a right-wing figure. And it was always Disgusted of Timbridge Wells, never of Weston-super-Mare or Eastbourne. That's because grown-ups don't think about what they are saying. They just react to the other person, and bolt a phrase on to what he has just said.

(How about a composite right-wing figure called Disgusted of Mongolia?)

Here's another example. If people attack the monarchy from a republican viewpoint, the inevitable answer used to be that the monarchy couldn't answer back so it wasn't fair to criticise them. That no longer holds water. If the royals want to defend themselves they can now go on television with Jonathan Dimbleby or Martin Bashir and defend themselves till the cows come home or the sets are switched off. So a new cliché is sought, and it has been found. When republicans attack the monarchy, the answer often is:

"If you get rid of the Queen, who are you going to have as president? Roy Hattersley?"

I have heard this several times on the radio. It's a silly answer, not because Roy Hattersley would be a bad president, but because if we did have a president, nobody would know or care much who he or she was. The Germans have a president. Hands up who knows his name. Nobody? Me neither.

When a politician goes on the

media and announces some reform, nobody ever asks him if it is a good or bad reform; they always ask him: "Where are you going to find the money to finance it?"

When someone is asked how he is going to vote in the next election, he or she almost always prefacing the answer with the introductory phrase: "Well, I think I have voted for all the main parties in my time ..."

When the subject of American humour is raised, someone will say, sooner or later: "Of course, the Americans have no sense of irony."

When someone is required to answer criticisms he will almost always say: "Well, we do get a lot of flak, but we get a lot of congratulations as well, so I think that shows we are getting it about right."

When a politician is being asked a question by the other side in Parliament, he hates answering it - he would much rather use the formula: "Well, that comes well from the honourable member considering that ... and then there is a choice of formulae from 'considering that in 1988 he said, and I quote ...' to 'considering that he belongs to a party which, when last in office, actually passed legislation ...'"

And if anyone notices these clichés, they promptly use another cliché to describe it. Here it is: If I had a pound for every time I've heard that phrase ...

JPV 10/12/95

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Church put too much faith in commercialism

From The Reverend William Paley
Sir: One important lesson the Church of England might learn from recent events surrounding the Nine O'clock Service in Sheffield is that the adoption by church authorities of commercial criteria and business methods has its dangers. The Bishop of Sheffield and the two archdeacons interviewed in the *Evening Standard* on Sunday clearly welcomed the NOS as successful. It satisfied consumer demand and filled the building.

such things, when the Home Secretary adopts an even more flippant attitude to his episcopate?

Yours faithfully,
WILLIAM PALEY
Oxford
27 November

From Mr Julian Cummins
Sir: Bryan Appleyard ("A church in psychedelic chaos", 28 November) is right to place the Nine O'clock Service in the context of the church's decline. He is wrong to suggest that the "bourgeois backwoods" is the only alternative.

On Wednesday, General Synod debates the Turnbull Report, proposing at long last a modern, efficient and theologically appropriate structure for the church. Turnbull offers a means by which the spiritual can not only flourish, but flourish without the excesses seen in Sheffield.

Mystics have known from the early centuries that discipline and structure are indispensable in handling things that are deep and powerful; Turnbull offers such a structure. The most appropriate response that Synod can make to

the widespread concern over both Chris Bram and the church's continuing decline is to endorse Turnbull, and endorse an early timetable for its implementation.

Yours sincerely,
JULIAN CUMMINS
Leeds
28 November

From Mr Nicolas Walter
Sir: Bryan Appleyard's attack on the Church of England (28 November) attempts to distinguish between "fundamentalism" and "New Ageism".

Both kinds of religion existed in Christianity from the start and have appeared in many revivals movements since, even in the Church of England. A more important point is that both involve the search for certainty and meaning beyond this life in this world and the abandonment of rational and pragmatic thought in favour of faith.

Yours sincerely,
NICOLAS WALTER
Rationalist Press Association
London, N1

Fast forward on asylum cases

From Ms Ann Widdecombe
Sir: May I clear up the confusion apparent in the report "Howard names white list" (24 November) by Heather Mills? The short procedure we have been piloting since May simply involves giving asylum applicants an early interview and a deadline for submitting any additional representations. We aim to decide the claim normally within five weeks, compared with the current average of over eight months for a new claim.

We are expanding our capacity to handle cases in this way, and the range of nationalities included. In due course we envisage applying the short procedure to most straightforward asylum claims. In developing the procedure, we have acted openly throughout. The short procedure does not require legislation or affect appeal rights. Designation of countries where there is, in general, no serious risk of persecution will require new powers which we shall bring forward under the Asylum and Immigration Bill. There will, in effect, be a rebuttable presumption against claims from designated countries.

It is vital that we take action to stem the growing number of undeserving asylum seekers coming to this country, who are currently costing the taxpayer over £200m per year in benefits alone. Any government that dodged this issue would surely not be worth its salt.

Yours faithfully,
ANN WIDDECOMBE
Minister of State
Home Office
London, SW1
27 November

Incentives for inventiveness

From Dr Trevor M. Jones
Sir: Kevin Watkins ("Whose property is life?", 20 November) is right to highlight the question of genetic engineering as one for public debate.

But it should not be confused, as Mr Watkins seems to do, with the issue of patenting biological inventions. A patent merely enables a patentee to limit unauthorised commercial use of a product or process - it neither permits commercialisation of the invention nor confers rights of ownership. Any controls which society deems necessary should not be applied to inventions or processes only through the patent law.

For these reasons, restricting patentability through European law's "morality" clause is both unnecessary and inappropriate. Not only is it the term imprecise and arbitrary, but it is surely immoral not to encourage inventions which have the potential to alleviate human suffering. The next revolutions in alleviating human suffering, through conquering diseases such as cancer, Alzheimer's and cystic fibrosis, will be the result of biotechnological or genetic research.

The pharmaceutical industry needs to be able to explore such exciting possibilities. It can only do this if there is an effective patent system in place to encourage it to maintain its multi-million pound investment into the research and development of new medicines.

Yours sincerely,
TREVOR M. JONES
Director-General
Association of British
Pharmaceutical Industry
London, SW1
21 November

At the heart of healthy eating

From Mr John Newman
Sir: In presenting the introduction of low-fat foods as some kind of marketing gimmick ("Too good to be true?", 24 November), Sarah Edgington has ignored one of the main drivers of this trend - namely the Government's Health of the Nation target to reduce total fat consumption to 35 per cent of energy intake.

The target was set because of the overriding need to reduce the incidence of premature death from coronary heart disease, and the medical evidence pointed to a reduction in fat consumption, together with other measures such as giving up smoking and increasing exercise as the best means of reversing this trend. Manufacturers have made a positive response by offering the reduced- and low-fat foods described.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN NEWMAN
Director
British Cake, Chocolate and
Confectionery Alliance
London, WC2
24 November

Steroid squeeze

From Dr S. Maric
Sir: Jim White is wrong to propagate the myth that body-builders have "fuller G-strings" ("Running on the road to nowhere", 25 November). Now that many body-builders (allegedly) take anabolic steroids, side effects dictate that the reverse is often true - the fullness of their G-strings leaves much to be desired.

Yours faithfully,
S. MARIC
Fulwood, South Yorkshire
26 November

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Professor Roland Dobrushin

Roland Dobrushin was one of the most brilliant representatives of the Russian school of probability theory founded by Andrei Kolmogorov.

It was not until after 1945 that the impact of the Russian probabilists' work was felt significantly. For more than two decades a relatively small team of young researchers (often undergraduates), grouped around Kolmogorov and Eugene Dynkin in Moscow, and later around Yuri Linnik in what was then Leningrad, was unchallenged in the vast area of theoretical and applied mathematics related to the concept of probability. It was an example of the tremendous success which could be achieved by a community not only inspired by the internal beauty of their abstract subject, but united in working in the specific social and political atmosphere of a country relatively isolated from the rest of the world.

From the 1950s onwards, probabilists, both Soviet and Western, gradually moved from theoretical towards more applied subjects. The importance of research in those areas where a probabilistic approach seemed promising did not escape the notice of the superpowers. Two notable examples of these applied areas are information theory and mathematical physics. The consequences were dramatic: from being collections of loosely connected facts of an empirical nature, these disciplines became integral parts of probability theory. Probabilistic language and, more importantly, a probabilistic way of thinking, provided them with a logical framework which both disciplines had previously lacked, and made possible spectacular progress throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

Dobrushin played a key role in the process of integration. In addition to his probabilistic intuition (the joke ran that he understood the notion of expected value better than anyone in the world), and superb analytical techniques, he possessed an exceptional degree of the ability to convert phenomenological and half-intuitive arguments

used by applied mathematicians and others into fine mathematical statements.

In the area of information theory he proved, in 1960, a general form of Claude Shannon's theorems (which establish the limits of the speed with which information can be sent through a channel) and made important contributions to coding theory. In mathematical physics, he gave in 1965 a general definition of a Gibbs state (later known as a Dobrushin-Lanford-Ruelle or DLR state) which provided the perfect foundation for the concept of phase transition – the instantaneous passage from one state of matter (say, a gaseous one to liquid one) – a definition which had hitherto eluded many outstanding specialists in the field. He then gave a beautiful proof of the existence of phase transition in the famous Ising model. The central part of this proof was the so-called Peierls' argument, named after Sir Rudolf Peierls, sometime Wykeham Professor of Physics at Oxford, who predeceased Dobrushin by only a few weeks.

Using his definition of a Gibbs state, and with the help of Peierls' argument, Dobrushin proved in a few lines that in the Ising model there exists a unique Gibbs state for high temperatures, and many such states for low temperatures and zero magnetic field. In other words, there is no phase transition for high temperatures but there is one for low temperatures. This discovery resulted in a complete revision of the whole theory of phase transitions to which Dobrushin, with other authors, contributed many fine ideas and arguments.

Roland Dobrushin will be remembered as an outstanding mathematician, and as an extraordinary personality. A man of strong character and great personal integrity, he quickly found himself at odds with the officialdom of the Soviet system. In 1959 at a meeting in the Department of Mechanics and Mathematics at Moscow State University (Mekh-mat), he denounced an official point of view. He was rebuked by the local Communist Party authori-



Dobrushin (right) with Sir Rudolf Peierls at New College, Oxford, on their only meeting, November 1993. Photograph: Geoffrey R. Grimmett

ties, and his career at Mekh-mat was blocked. He was prevented from defending his doctoral thesis at Moscow University (although he finally managed to obtain a degree elsewhere), and his upgrading was turned down by the Mekh-mat Communist Party organisation. His case was generally considered as one of the first examples of repressive measures carried out against Soviet mathematicians.

Notwithstanding, Dobrushin continued defying the authorities. He was a co-signatory in the 1960s and 1970s of many protest letters denouncing political trials (such as

and the administration even offered some protection, within limits, to those members of staff looked on with disfavour by the Communist Party and the Soviet authorities. This was in part due to the long tradition of relative freedom allowed to those physicists and mathematicians who had in some way contributed to the Soviet nuclear and space programmes.

Dobrushin was fortunate to have found a position in such an institute, where throughout the 1960s and 1970s he formed an active group of researchers which distinguished itself in

though he never formally associated himself with any dissident group, nor considered leaving his country.

There was, however, one aspect of professional life where officialdom had the upper hand: election to Academian. There was no chance of such an election by the conservative Mathematics Section of the Academy, partly because of Dobrushin's anti-authority stance, but also because of his non-Russian origins. He came from a prominent Jewish family, his uncle being a member of the Jewish Committee active in the disclosure of Nazi atrocities during the Second World War. After the war, all the committee members and many other Jewish activists were sentenced to labour camps which few survived. Nor did Dobrushin's German background (immigrants to St Petersburg, where he was born in 1929) find favour with the Academy purists.

Dobrushin never himself sought election. Many years later, in 1991, another outstanding mathematician, who had similarly been denied the honour, was finally elected. In his speech of congratulation on that occasion, Dobrushin said:

"The fact that you have been elected does not change my opinion of you, but does change my opinion of the Academy."

A second aspect of life which the authorities could control was travel outside the Soviet Union.

Dobrushin's enormous popularity, both professionally and personally, resulted in numerous invitations and honours. In 1982, together with Iris Murdoch, he was elected Honorary Member of the American Academy of Fine Arts and Sciences, Boston, but was unable to attend the presentation. It was not until 1988, with glassnost and perestroika, that he was finally given permission to travel abroad. Even then, such was the inertia of the whole cumbersome system that it required the intervention of a member of Gorbachev's inner circle before his visa was granted.

This long-awaited freedom was greeted with great enthusiasm by his Western colleagues. At last he visited the United

Kingdom. On his second trip, in 1993, he spent several months at the Isaac Newton College Institute of Cambridge University. He then travelled to Oxford to meet Peierls for the first and only time, over lunch in New College.

Roland Dobrushin will be remembered as a torch-bearer in many flourishing areas of theoretical and applied research. A popular joke at gatherings of Moscow mathematicians and physicists concerned a man who drops a valuable item in the dark, and undertakes an intensive search for it a few steps away, under a street light. A bystander asks him why he does not conduct his search where he dropped the item to which the man replies that it is only chance of finding it is under the light: the moral being, take care where you put street lights! Dobrushin was a striking example of a man who intuitively knew where the light, in the form of new definitions and related ideas, should be put.

Dobrushin was a great bear of a man, with a huge smile and wonderful sense of humour, who was much loved and admired by his many friends. Despite his unattractive appearance, he possessed remarkable physical stamina, and he greatly enjoyed (like so many Russians) swimming and Alpine and cross-country skiing expeditions. Once, in the 1960s, with other prominent young mathematicians, he was hiking in a mountainous region of Central Asia. It was difficult terrain and one of the group was injured, despite his superior expertise and training. Dobrushin, in sympathy, said: "Forgive me – I know it is I who ought to have fallen, not you."

Vuri Sabov

Roland L'ovich Dobrushin, mathematician: born Leningrad 29 July 1929; Assistant Professor, Department of Mechanics and Mathematics, Moscow State University 1955-65; Professor 1991-95; Head of Laboratory, Institute of Problems Transmission, Russian Academy of Sciences 1965-95; married four times (five daughters); died Moscow 12 November 1995.



Huby: poised, decorous and alluringly blonde

Roberta Huby

In its heyday intimate revue tutored many great talents, including those of Hermione Gingold, Max Adrian, Joyce Grenfell, Harold Pinter, Peter Cook, Alan Bennett, Maggie Smith, Kenneth Williams and John Mortimer. It also tutored the lovely Roberta Huby's.

Alan Meville's sketches (and Gingold's larking) packed the Ambassadors with the *Sweet and Low* series of revues during the Second World War. But half a century onwards the art of revue is like the dodo.

It is true that *The Shakespeare Revue* (managed by Michael Cordon, who put on some of the best of them in the 1950s and 1960s) has been well received at the Vaudeville. It certainly reminds us what it used to be about. But the best of the old revues did not have a "theme" or revive stuff from old revues. They had personalities.

Revue in the bubbly Huby's

day could fill large theatres as well as small. At the Palace she was with Jack Hubert and Cicely Courtneidge, Flanagan and Allen or Florence Desmond in shows called *Hi-de-Hi* or *Keep Going* (the war was on); at the Palladium it was Tommy Trinder and Ben Lyon in *Gangway*; and at the Prince of Wales it was the great Sid Field and his straight man Jerry Desmond in *Strike It Again*.

What revue would draw to it, apart from new talents, was new audiences. To a schoolboy like myself it made a break from Shakespeare (Richardson's *Falstaff*, Gielgud's *Macbeth*, Wolf's *Lear*), and *Strindberg* (Wilfrid Lawson's *The Father*).

Roberta Huby stood clear of all that kind of thing. It was her femininity, her sense of comedy and her lightness of touch that kept her busy. Her finest moments came with Ian Carmichael, Joan Heal, Dora Bryan and Jeremy Hawk in the long-running *Lyric Revue*, when it transferred from Hammerstein in 1951. This was a truly intimate revue, of the kind in which she had begun 10 years earlier at the Ambassadors.

That show – *The New Ambassadors Revue* – was my first revue. An accompanying parent described it as "satirical", whatever that was. He had some difficulty in finding a definition. It was Huby's first West End appearance. She had a song

dedicated to the invisible and always male newscasters on the so-called wireless who we are told wore dinner jackets; and who, as a concession to a cosier relationship between the BBC and its listeners, millions had begun, after saying, "This is the news", to add, "And this is so-and-so reading it."

Such informality from such a pompous source was material for a satirical shaft. Thus it was that, seated under a spotlight and holding in her hands a sheaf of papers, *the poised, decorous and alluringly blonde Huby*, without a flicker of an eyelid or a hint of hilarity, purred into one of those old-fashioned table microphones on the table before her, as if addressing each one of us individually – and I can hum the tune to this day.

Perhaps you have heard of Alvar Lidell. Well, this is me reading it...

We all fell about. Everybody knew Alvar Lidell's authentic tones as he delivered the nine o'clock news; the irreverence of it was splendid. I was converted. Whenever a new revue was playing I would be there; until it was supposedly wiped out by the satire boom of the 1960s.

Huby must have enjoyed revue or she would could never have taken a chance on, say "an intimate revue from the Norwegian of *Finn Boe*", *Rendezvous* (Comedy, 1952), with such revue stalwarts as Walter Crisham and Chili Boucher.

What could be better training, though, for musical comedy and farce? There was the Drury Lane musical *Plain and Fancy*, and an Aldwych farce to end all Aldwych farces under Peter Hall's direction, *Brouaha-ha* (Aldwych, 1958), in which Huby played up gamely as Mrs Alma Eggers Diddle to the elusive Peter Sellers.

There were also films – with Arthur Askey in *I Thank You* (1941) – and there was television (*Jezebel Ex UK* and *A Voice in the Sky*): but isn't that medium often blamed for the demise of satirical revue?

Adam Benedict

Roberta Clarice Huby, actress: born London 29 September 1913; married 1941 John Roberts (died 1972); one son; marriage dissolved 1959, 1959 Jack Melford (died 1973); died Kingston-upon-Thames 19 November 1995.

Georgiana Blakiston

One day as a child Georgiana Russell took a book from the shelves at her parents' house and found that someone had written "EAR" on the flyleaf. "I was impressed by the boldness of the writing, and the singularity of the word," she wrote 60 years later. "For had 'EYE' or 'LEO' been inscribed it could not have seemed stranger."

Her father told her that they were the initials of her grandmother Elizabeth Anne Russell – that she had been able to read in eight languages and had bought most of the books in the house". Elizabeth Anne Russell was the dominant of the two leading characters in Georgiana Blakiston's first book, *Lord William Russell and his Wife 1815-1846* (1972), which with *Woburn and the Russells* (1980) and *Letters of Conrad Russell 1897-1947* (1987) forms the corpus of her work, coolly observed and deftly expressed. On a family that has cut a sometimes radical swathe through British political and intellectual life over four centuries.

Georgiana Blakiston's father, Harold Russell, was a lawyer and county gentleman; her mother, Lady Victoria

Leveson-Gower, from whom she inherited a delicious calmness of voice and manner, was a daughter of the second Earl Granville. "Giana" was the youngest of their three children and her early years were spent between London and The Ridgeway, a substantial Victorian villa near Shere, in Surrey.

Giana was educated at home by tutors and governesses before taking a domestic science diploma at Bedford College, London University; but much of her taste for flora and fauna, history, languages and the classics was imbued from the conversational air breathed by her parents and her father's legion brothers and sisters. As a group, these uncles and aunts were shy to the point of speechlessness; and characteristically thought it better to remain silent if they had nothing worthwhile to say.

Giana Russell was introduced to Noel Blakiston when he was fresh from taking Classics at Cambridge. A photograph taken at the time of their engagement shows Noel in a high buttoned jacket, his round eyes and fine, prominent cheeks suggesting the handsome looks for which he was so ad-

mired, and Giana sporting a beret and stylish scarf showing off her broad features and her arresting eyes, which even into her 10th decade seemed to see into and beyond the subject of their gentle gaze. They were married in 1929 and moved into a house in Chelsea, west London – where they lived for the rest of their lives – from which Noel went daily to his work in the Public Record Office, in Chancery Lane, where he became head of the Search Room.

The Blakistons had two daughters in the 1930s – Rachel and Caroline, now well known as an actress on stage and television. With the coming of war, part of the Public Record Office was evacuated to Clandon Park, in Surrey. The Blakistons moved into the house, and during air raids they slept in the basement, stacked high with debris and case indexes from Chancery Lane. Their home in London was lived in meanly, while the artist Anthony Devas and his wife Nicolette (née Macnamara), the sister of Dylan Thomas's wife, Caitlin.

After the war, the Blakistons resumed their London life, making themselves a centre for

writers and artists, taking in lodgers, including the young Laurie Lee, and bringing people together over unpretentious and interesting food, cooked by Giana, who kept up the tradition as a widow into her nineties. Noel Blakiston, who had been Cyril Connolly's best friend at Eton, contributed to Connolly's *Horizon*, while Giana printed fabrics and painted tiles for her kitchen.

The Blakistons were never very well off but the situation was eased when an insident son, Diana Russell, died in 1971, aged 97, leaving her house and possessions to Giana. From her and from her other Russell aunt, Flora (who died in 1967, aged 98), she inherited a mass of family correspondence which was the spur for her book on her great-grandparents. Blakiston lets the characters in this family saga tell the story through pages from their letters and diaries – interspersed with her own pithy linking passages, which pass the tests triumphantly of making such a book work. Most telling is the way in which it ends. The fascinating intellectual Lady William Russell – admired by

Byron when a girl; a possessive mother exasperating to her husband's family – spent the last 25 years of her life as a widow in London, a convert to Roman Catholicism surrounded by a new circle of companions that took in Robert Browning and the Thomas Carlysles. This quarter-century is dealt with in one paragraph. The wit and decidedness of such brevity shows the author more than worthy of her great-grandmother's independence of outlook.

Blakiston's researches for her first two books took her to the British Museum and to the Russell Archives at Woburn Abbey and at the Bedford estate office in London. Her third volume, an edition of her uncle Conrad's letters, took her back over the early part of her life, and there is an easy authoritativeness in the short biographies devoted to Conrad Russell's correspondents from the worlds of literature and intellectual society: Maurice Baring, Hilaire Belloc, Evelyn Waugh, Raymond Asquith, Edward Marsh and the star of the book, the celebrated beauty Lady Diana Cooper, the subject of Conrad Russell's chaste adoration.

The volume, which appeared in Blakiston's 85th year, won her renewed and deserved *éclat* in the world of 20th-century literary biography. She never wrote her own autobiography but, for all her shrewdness in looking at the past, she lived determinedly in the present, concerned with the lives of her children, her grandchildren and her friends (ultimately spread across four generations), and in her 92nd year thought nothing of travelling to Florence.

Louis Jebb
Rachel Georgiana Russell, historian: born London 28 January 1903; married 1929 Noel Blakiston (died 1985; two daughters); died London 15 November 1995.

Rules of natural justice depend on context

LAW REPORT

29 November 1995

But then the department received a report in which it was alleged that Mr Crabtree had shown a child in his care a pornographic video and had bought him a pornographic magazine.

After an investigation, the panel, chaired by Mrs Bashforth, the service manager in the department for the Kingswood/Northavon area, wrote to the court of inquiry and had decided not to re-register him as a foster carer.

The Court of Appeal dismissed an appeal by Robert Crabtree against the decision of Mr Justice Thorpe, on 22 March 1994, refusing an application for judicial review of the decision of the Fostering Panel of the Kingswood/Northavon area of Avon County Council, on 14 October 1992, not to re-register Mr Crabtree as a foster carer pursuant to regulation 4 of the Fostering Placement (Children) Regulations 1991 (SI 910).

Iain Glen (Bobbins Mackin, Bristol) for the applicant; Timothy Corner (Avon County Council) for the respondent.

Lord Justice Neill said that until October 1991 the work of Mr Crabtree as a foster carer had met with considerable success.

ed. have a predisposition towards a certain result. This did not mean, however, that such a body could not reach a fair decision. The courts must be careful not to treat the decision making process of such bodies as though they were judicial tribunals.

It was clear that the question of Mr Crabtree's continuing registration as a foster carer was considered at the meeting with care and at some length.

The panel had a duty to place the interests of children in care at the forefront of its deliberations.

Moreover, relations between Mr Crabtree and the department deteriorated. He had registered with the Kingswood/Northavon area. It had been decided that Mrs Bashforth, who usually chaired the panel, should not attend the meeting because many of Mr Crabtree's complaints against

most decisions by administrative bodies had to be taken by those with knowledge of the facts. The members comprising such bodies might, because of previous knowledge or some policy which had been adopted.

Lord Justice Millett and Sir Ian Glidewell concurred.

Paul McGrath, Barrister

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS
The Duke of Edinburgh visited the Prince of Wales' residence, the Royal Lodge, Windsor, on 27 November. A memorial service for the Queen Mother was held

INDEPENDENT • Wednesday 29 November 1995

BUSINESS NEWS DESK: tel 0171-293 2530, fax 0171-293 2098

Investment: Severn's balancing act

15

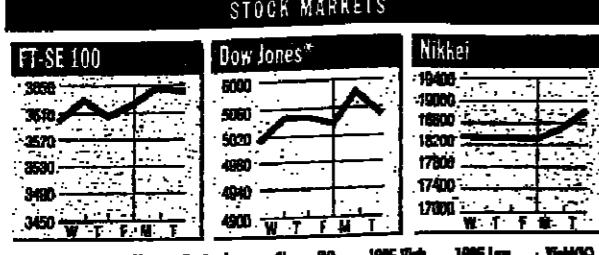
Market Report: Budget reaction

16

CITY & BUSINESS EDITOR: JEREMY WARNER

MARKET SUMMARY

STOCK MARKETS



Index	Close	Day's change	Change (%)	1995 High	1995 Low	YTD (%)
FTSE 100	3648	-02	-0.05	36490	29542	3.9
FTSE 250	3947	-26	-0.65	39913	33019	3.5
FTSE 350	18071	-03	-0.16	18074	9310	3.8
FT Small Cap	19487	n/a	-	19931	15785	3.3
FT All Share	17163	n/a	-	17918	14992	3.8
New York *	50452	+27	+0.5	50563	46927	2.3
Tokyo	16684	+143	+0.8	16684	14854	4.0**
Hong Kong	9623	+299	+3.1	100329	69679	4.1**
Frankfurt	22415	+34	+0.2	23170	19110	2.0**
Paris	18703	-14	-0.7	20723	17015	3.2**
Milan	89560	-140	-1.3	10910	8920	1.8**

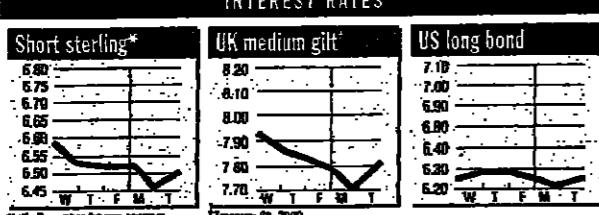
*New York time & graph at 1200 hours

**FTSE World Index Fields

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

FTSE 350 companies (excluding investment trusts)	Falls	Falls	
Highland Diet	367	20	5.8
Imperial	234	16	5.0
Rolls-Royce	175.5	8	35
TI Group	453	12	2.7
Unilever	419	11	2.7

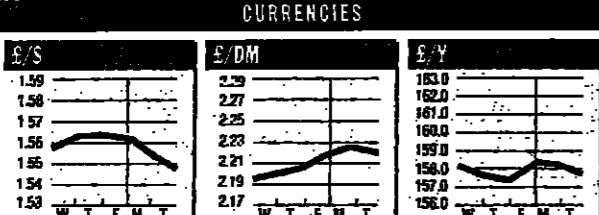
INTEREST RATES



Money Market Rates	Bank Yield*
UK	6.69
US	5.75
Japan	0.34
Germany	3.91

*Benchmark indices

CURRENCIES



**New York exchange rates and oil Brent January at 1200 hours

OTHER INDICATORS

Yesterday	Buy's chg	Year Ago	Index	Last	Yr Ago	Net Flgs
Oil Brent S	7729	-0.09	7722	RPI	1498	+3.2%
Gold S	38830	+440	38400	GDP	1065	-2.1pc
Gold £	25095	+441	24565	Base Rates	6750	5.25%

Source: FT Information

IN BRIEF

Mortgage lending holds steady

New net lending for mortgages by the high street banks was £594m in October, virtually the same as the previous month, according to the British Bankers' Association. The number of new mortgage approvals was significantly up on the month, climbing 14 per cent to 33,506. Last October the number of approvals fell. Tim Sweeney, the BBA's director general, said the buoyant figure this year was encouraging, pointing to a firming of the housing market next year.

Caradon does deal with Cohen

Caradon has agreed compensation for Daniel Cohen, who recently resigned as a director. Under his service agreement, which was subject to a three-year notice period, Mr Cohen was entitled to salary of £248,400, a pension on retirement and certain other benefits. The company will pay him £32,000 and will continue, until March 1997, to provide the other contractual benefits at a total cost that is unlikely to exceed £32,000.

Reshuffle at Tate & Lyle

Sir Neil Shaw is to remain chairman of Tate & Lyle until 1998. Larry Pillard has been appointed chief operating officer and group managing director. Simon Gifford is replacing Paul Lewis as finance director. Mr Lewis will continue as deputy chairman with additional responsibility for corporate development and human resources.

Pilkington disposals raise £50m

Pilkington, the glass making company, has sold two businesses from its Visioncare division for £50m cash. The world-wide lens-care operations of Pilkington Barnes-Hind have been sold to Allergan, and the Paragon Optical division has been sold to a subsidiary of Summit Partners, an investment company based in the US.

Disney shows income boost

Walt Disney boosted fourth-quarter net income by 17 per cent to \$264m, lifting the full-year result from \$1.11bn to \$1.38bn. Michael Eisner, chairman and chief executive officer, said: "These results reflect the health of each of our three business segments of filmed entertainment, theme parks and resorts and consumer products". Film revenues increased 25 per cent to \$6bn.

Travelers resumes Aetna talks

Travelers Group, the giant US broking company, is believed to have resumed talks with Aetna Life & Casualty, one of the largest US insurers, to buy Aetna's property and casualty business. Aetna is also continuing talks to sell the business, which is valued at \$3.5bn, to Kohlberg Kravis Roberts & Co, the arbitraging firm. Aetna and Travelers came close to a deal earlier this month, but differences were said to remain on price. Neither company was available for comment.

Hong Kong venture for Rolls-Royce

Rolls-Royce has formed an aero engine overhaul company, Hong Kong Aero Engine Services, in a 50-50 joint venture with Hong Kong Aircraft Engineering. Rolls has agreed to pay HK\$20m in recognition of the volume of business and relevant interest it has brought to the venture. The new company will overhaul commercial aero engines in the Asia/Pacific region.

Share-dealing revolution: Fierce opposition from board members threatens plans for order-driven facility

Exchange faces fight on trading system

JOHN EISENHAMMER

Financial Editor

The Stock Exchange executive will tomorrow try to push through plans for revolutionising share dealing in London against fierce opposition from some of its most powerful board members. "We are heading for a bust-up in the board on this issue," an insider said yesterday.

Michael Lawrence, chief executive of the Exchange, is keen to show the market, which has endured a tide of negative publicity recently, that he is on top of events. The executive wants an announcement to be made now to demonstrate that the Exchange will offer members a choice of two share-trading systems from next August.

Alongside the traditional London quote-driven system, whereby large market-making firms use their own capital to post continuous prices at which they will buy and sell shares in all the main

UK companies, the Exchange is developing an electronic order-driven dealing facility.

Automatically and anonymously matching buy and sell orders, this system would be similar to that used in all other major international financial centres. Several of the big US investment banks, which are wieldng increasing influence in the City, have been pushing for the rapid introduction of an order-driven system.

"London is an anachronism. Share-dealing here is among the most inefficient in the world. We need a change as soon as possible," said a chief market-maker from an American broking firm.

Some of the biggest British market-makers, which have traditionally been among the Exchange's most influential members, are fighting a fierce rearguard defence against the order-driven plans.

Firms such as SBC Warburg,

Revolutionary: Michael Lawrence, Stock Exchange chief executive, wants to move to a dual trading system

NatWest Markets, BZW, Smith New Court (now Merrill Lynch), which all earn considerable amounts from market-making, are concerned that a dual dealing system is unsustainable, and that the introduction of order-driven trading will rapidly kill off London's hallmark dealing tradition.

All these big firms, which each employ some 50 to 60 market-makers, concede that there

would be significant job cuts among some of the City's highest-paid traders should the order-driven system prevail.

The atmosphere within the board has become strained, with powerful market-makers arguing that the Exchange is pushing too hard to ensure its own success. Proposals by Mr Lawrence to take the Exchange into new commercial areas which will compete with some

of its own members, such as inter-dealer brokers, have provoked outrage. The Exchange has now said it would not seek new income sources to replace the loss next year of the £60m annual revenues from Talisman, when it is replaced by the new electronic Crest settlement system. The Exchange expects to sack 500 of its 1,300 staff. The Exchange has been

working on its order-driven facility for three years. Recognised as state-of-the-art, the technology would be introduced next August as part of the final phase of the "Sequence" modernisation programme. The final go-ahead for the order-driven system need only be taken next year, but the Exchange executive is pressing for a formal decision soon to end uncertainty over its role.

Doubts grow over Granada's campaign for Forte

JOHN SHEPHERD

and MATHEW HORSMAN

Doubts are growing in the City about Granada's ability to sell £500m in assets earmarked for disposal should it win its £23bn bid for Forte.

Euromut intended to campaign relentlessly to abolish intra-community duty-free sales before 1999 if possible, but in any case to stop the numerous abuses it creates and to prevent any extension beyond that date," the company said.

Euromut's finances had been based on the assumption that duty-free sales would be abolished in 1993.

In September, Euromut slashed duty-free prices by up to a third at its Folkestone and Calais terminals, a move the company claimed yesterday had significantly boosted revenue.

But Euromut still makes far less money from tax-free sales than ferries, which it has described as "floating supermarkets". Analysts estimated that less than 10 per cent of Euromut's revenues came from duty-free sales, compared with 30 per cent for the ferries.

Ferry firms offer return day-trips for as little as £1 because the on-board spend generates more cash than ticket revenues

Gold market panics as futures price falls

DIANE COYLE

Economics Correspondent

The gold market was in complete turmoil yesterday. For the first time since a brief episode in the 1970s, the futures price of the precious metal fell below the spot market price.

As almost all the gold ever mined still exists, the main activity in the gold market is borrowing and lending. Gold producers borrow – and sell – current stocks of gold against their future output. The lenders are big banks, which in turn borrow from the gold reserves of central banks.

South African producers have started to borrow more gold recently due to a tight profit squeeze. The price at which they can sell gold, which is fixed in rand terms, has stopped increasing in dollar terms because the country's exchange has been unusually stable.

The increase in their demand for long-term gold loans has in turn triggered a sharp rise in banks' demand for the short-term gold loans which are available from central banks.

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Simon Pincombe CITY DIARY

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

Edited by TOM STEVENSON

Tough balancing act at Severn

Like its peers in the water supply industry, Severn Trent is finding it hard to maintain an acceptable balance between its customers and shareholders. The group has done a reasonable job for the latter since privatisation in 1989, producing rising earnings and dividends. But increasing resentment at the soaring prices suffered by its customers to finance a massive capital investment programme worth £20bn over five years has boiled over this year.

The political furor that led to the widespread announcement of "benefit-sharing" packages, involving rebates to customers and special dividends, has been made all the more embarrassing by the drought.

The resulting hosepipe ban and its continuation into what is normally thought of as winter has forced Severn to announce a £130m top-up to its spending schedule. The problem for Severn is that keeping a clamp on costs to keep shareholders happy has left it unable to cope with the exceptional conditions of the past summer.

The measures unveiled yesterday will see £40m invested in increasing supplies, an increase of £10m to £255m a year for five years on stopping leaks and a further £40m put into improving local distribution networks. The hope is that the latest increases should prevent a repeat of this year's red faces and prove only a blip in the progressive reduction of debt. As importantly, the moves could help to head off political and regulatory attempts to limit profits.

The drought aside, the group has continued to produce the goods in its main water and sewerage business. The underlying increase of one-eighth in operating profits, ignoring last year's £55m exceptional charge, takes the half-year total of £260m to the same level as for the whole of 1991. A head of £6.7m spent on drought-refined work, direct operating costs rose only 1.3 per cent as the effects of last year's restructuring started to feed through.

The picture elsewhere is less inspiring. The £212m paid in 1991 for Biffa, the waste company that remains Severn's main diversification, still looks too high. Operating profits rose 34 per cent to £10.2m, but the waste arm remains several million pounds shy of breaking even after financing charges. Other businesses saw their contribution fall from £2.1m to £700,000, suggesting that Severn still has a long way to go in diversifying away from its heavily regulated core operations.

Full-year profits of £370m would put

the shares at 679p, up 11p, on a lowly forward rating of below 8. With a prospective yield of 5.9 per cent they might be thought to be fully discounting the political uncertainty, but the risks until the election remain sizeable.

Morland stays ahead of rivals

Morland has been a remarkable success since the beer orders turned the industry upside-down six years ago and full-year profits up a useful 11 per cent in the 12 months to September continued the good news. Over the past five years the company has consistently outperformed the other regional brewers in earnings and dividend growth.

After a 10 per cent increase in sales to £62.6m, pre-tax profits before exceptional property disposals were up £1.02m (9.96%). Earnings per share, up 9 per cent to 35.7p, allowed a 12 per cent jump in the full-year dividend payout to 11.8p, 2.6 times covered.

How has Morland achieved this in an industry otherwise troubled by flagging sales, rising costs and squeezed

margins? First it is small enough to be able to grow despite a stagnant market as a whole. It is well managed, has a sensible strategy for growth and a good track record of implementing it.

Although Morland is best known for Old Speckled Hen, its highly successful beer brand, brewing actually contributes less than one-fifth of profits and with margins being squeezed and a bigger proportion of sales going through lower-margin free-trade and off-sales outlets that percentage will decline further. That said, reducing the brewery's dependence on its tied estate and focusing on a handful of high-margin brands was the right strategic move.

The rest of Morland's profits come from tenancies and managed pubs, with the latter growing fast as the company adapts new concepts from its larger rivals such as Whitbread – profits in managed pubs rose 30 per cent in the period. Tenancies do not have the same growth potential but they provide a good steady wholesale business for the brewing arm and generate significant amounts of cash. Volumes during the year held up much better than the market as a whole, which slipped 5 per cent.

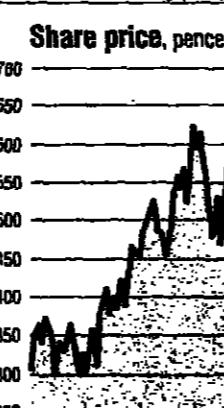
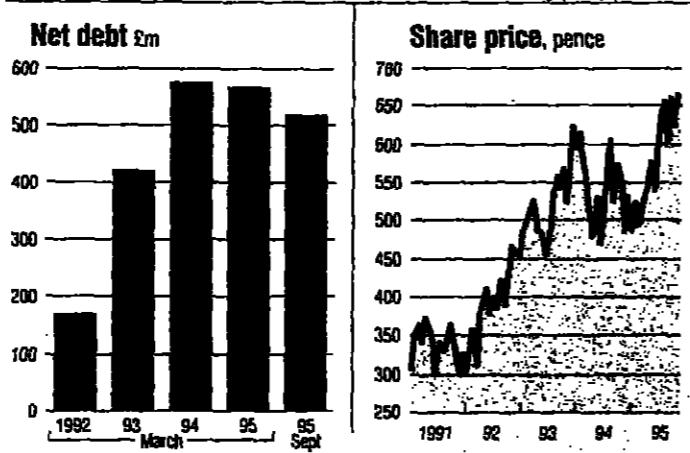
Overall, Morland is in good shape, with negligible gearing, and steady

Severn Trent: at a glance

Market value: £2.49bn, share price 679p

	1993	1994	1995	1994	1995
Turnover (£m)	605	988	1,076	534	569
Pre-tax profits (£m)	270	281	268	108	169
Earnings per share (pence)	69.9	72.7	66.0	27.7	45.3
Dividends per share (pence)	21.1	22.8	28.9	8.23*	9.20*

*excluding special payment of 3.4p



growth pencilled in. Profits before tax next year of more than £1.4m put the shares, up 3p to 520p, on a prospective price/earnings ratio of about 13. After the underperformance of the past three years, they are good value.

Norcross creeps back into black

Norcross, the troubled former mini-conglomerate, has hacked off so many limbs in the past few years that what remains is barely recognisable. The latest disposals, five building materials businesses, have raised a further £51.4m.

The print and packaging division, specialising in labels for supermarkets and the Underground ticked that the "clever" magnetic stripe, is the next on the list. This will leave Norcross with just its ceramics division, including the Triton shower business, and the focus will be complete.

As an investment, however, Norcross has been an unmitigated disaster. After trading at over 400p in 1988 the shares have plummeted to just 75p yesterday, down 3p on the day, but the outlook is starting to look encouraging. Yesterday's results showed a return to the black with pre-tax profits of £18.7m in the six months to September compared with last year's £19m profit and the full year's £51m loss. Gearing is down to 37 per cent compared with nearly 80 per cent in March and the plan is to sweep the group's assets, boosted by £5m of cost-cutting announced in June.

After considering a merger or flotation of its print and packaging business a sale now looks most likely. Analysts suggest a price tag of £100m. The company said yesterday that it was in talks with several interested parties.

The timing is hardly perfect as margin pressures have forced many print and packaging groups to issue profits warnings. But Norcross management, led by Michael Doherty, is confident that a decent price can be achieved and that a fair balance of the proceeds can be distributed to shareholders.

Analysts are forecasting pre-experimental profits of £1.5m for the full year, which puts the stock on a forward rating of 12. That's reasonable given the recovery potential and the possibility of a takeover if management fails to deliver growth.



Literary luncheon: Cedric Dickens, suspended at the George and Vulture

with Dickens in which he included the elaborate drinks mentioned in his ancestor's books. The upstairs room at the George and Vulture – a hostelry near Lombard Street – was chosen as the lunch club venue because it was where Mr Pickwick met Sam Weller in *Pickwick Papers*. To quote from the book: "I say old boy where do you hang out?" asks Bob Sawyer. Mr Pickwick replied that he was at present suspended at the George & Vulture.

Since then there has been a bitter battle to preserve the ancient inn from developers. It is now owned by Samuel Smith, the Tadcaster brewer, which intends to drag the building out of its Dickens & Vulture. Another in a long line of Nigerian fraud scams aimed at ripping off English companies. This time the targets appear to be in the theatre and entertainment business and the perpetrator is passing himself off as Jide Adelola Ademola, the director of budget and planning at the Nigerian Ministry of Works and Housing in Lagos.

In a letter on John Bull quality headed notepaper, the alleged Mr Ademola claims to have swindled the military government out of \$33.572m (people have been executed for less). He wants to stash the money abroad and wonders if anyone wants to give him access to their company bank accounts, together with three invoices and three sheets of headed note paper, duly signed and stamped. In return for laundering large sums, the alleged Mr Ademola promises 30 per cent commission. And pigs might fly.

Editorial page editor: Simon Pincombe

Damp brings a dry end to a venerable institution

Editorial page editor: Simon Pincombe

SKB chief housed at Grosvenor

DAVID HELLIER

Jan Leschly, the chief executive of SmithKline Beecham, spent nearly five months last year at one of the Grosvenor House Hotel's luxury £44,000-a-year apartments as he prepared to relocate to the US.

Mr Leschly listed apartment 138, 86-90 Park Lane, which is owned by Forte, as his usual residential address in the 1995 SKB annual return.

Built in the heart of Mayfair between 1927 and 1929, each

apartment offers a suite of spacious rooms and access to all the luxury facilities available to hotel guests. Beecham used to keep three apartments at the Grosvenor House Hotel and SKB has kept one since the two groups merged.

SmithKline says Mr Leschly stayed in apartment 138, described as the company's corporate apartment, from 26 August 1994 until 10 January 1995 after selling his residence in Marlow, Buckinghamshire.

A spokesman said he did

not have exclusive use of the apartment at the time and added that he made a personal contribution to the costs that was assessed and approved by the company's accountants.

"He used it as a home address and paid rent accordingly," a company spokesman said.

Mr Leschly, a former Wimbledon semi-finalist, was paid £2.47m in 1994 in salary and bonus compared with £1.9m in the previous year. This included an amount, said to be £800,000, for relocation expenses. In ad-

dition, he made a paper profit on his share options of more than £650,000.

Mr Leschly, who joined the company as chairman of pharmaceuticals in June 1990, now lists as his address a two-storey home in Hopewell, New Jersey, the value of which is assessed at about £875,000. He relocated last year. He bought the home before moving to the UK.

A company spokesman said the payment he received was to compensate for losses incurred on the sale of his UK home.



Jan Leschly: spent five months in luxury apartment

Euromoney profits fall 25%

NIGEL COPE

Euromoney Publications, the specialist magazine publisher, shares in which fell by a quarter after a profits warning last month, has reported a 25 per cent fall in profits to £18.3m for the year to September.

The company had warned of the fall, causing the shares to plunge by more than 300p last month, bringing to an end one of the most impressive success stories in the publishing sector in recent years.

Euromoney blamed losses in

new offices in Frankfurt, Paris and Jakarta as well as disappointing attendances at its seminars. The Mexican peso crisis hit the businesses in the emerging markets while the Barings crisis and the consolidation in the bank sector also held back demand for training courses, exhibitions and seminars.

The company said it expected to recover from the setback and that the rationalisation of the AIC conference division was continuing. This includes job cuts and the closure of the

Amsterdam office. Euromoney has been building its stake in AIC and holds 70 per cent of the group, which accounts for more than half of group sales.

However, it is a lower-margin business susceptible to lower sales.

While attendances at the divisions' main conferences have been maintained, seminar attendances have been lower and some have had to be cancelled.

The group's magazines and other businesses remained strong, it said. The dividend was increased from 42.5p to 43.5p.

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Illicit bets fear as pubs switch to new channel

Cubs and public houses will soon be able to switch on to a new specialised television channel for racing, prompting concern among bookmakers that illegal gambling will be encouraged.

The Racing Channel, launched little more than three weeks ago has so far signed up more than 8,500 viewers for the new service, which broadcasts Sky satellite dishes from at least two race meetings each day, at a cost of £19.99 a month.

Satellite Information Services (SIS), which produces the channel, has also started to persuade local cable television companies who initially treated the venture with caution, to provide the service to its customers. Westminster Cable, one of the country's largest, will carry the channel from 1 December.

Not everyone, however, has greeted the Racing Channel with unequivocal delight. Within the next few days, SIS will begin issuing contracts to pubs and clubs which wish to take the station at the significantly higher cost of £300 per month, and the arrival of daily racing in the local has prompted concern among bookmakers that illegal

gambling will be encouraged.

Rare indeed is the punter who has not at one time or another resented paying 10 per cent "tax" (in reality, a mix of duty, a contribution to the Levy and a slice for the bookie) on every bet. As a result, illegal betting – a chap in the pub says he's a tenter at SP and you spend the tax on drink instead – is often seen as a victimless crime.

As with other dodges, though, it is the honest punter who pays, with a higher level of deductions than might otherwise be necessary, while smaller betting shops, already under pressure from the Lottery, might be forced out of business altogether.

Something that's illegal is by definition very hard to define. Will Roseff, of the British Betting Office Association said yesterday, "My estimate is that £50m in duty is being lost each year, but it might be twice that. If people can sit in a pub with a drink and watch the racing and bet without tax, it's very hard for a betting shop to compete."

Irvine, though, is adamant

that the Racing Channel will not make the problem any worse, and that bars where illegal betting is taking place will have their service withdrawn immediately. "If people are going to offer bets in a pub they're going to do it whether it's the Racing Channel or Channel 4," he said. "We're not going to encourage people any more than what's shown already, and the races which are on the BBC and Channel 4 are the top races of the year, which get the most publicity."

"We've got the best police force in the world. They're called betting shops, and they're not going to allow their margins to be eroded if we get information from a bookmaker that illegal betting is going on in a pub, they will be switched off."

Roseff, who invited a senior Customs & Excise official to a BBOA board meeting yesterday to discuss the problem, would like the revenue officials to set up an information hotline to take the onus off the bookies themselves. "They went very well together."

"At the moment if a book-

maker finds business going down and discovers a pub doing it then it's very difficult because he becomes the villain in the area, he upsets the landlord and so on. It would be much easier to make a quiet call and let the Customs deal with it."

In racecourse bars yesterday, the talk was of the jockeys' merry-go-round which has now seen Graham Bradley installed in the saddle for Viking Flagship's seasonal debut at Sandown on Saturday.

Bradley replaces Jamie Osborne, who got off the champion two-mile chaser to ride the ultimate champion, Master Oats, in the Rehearsal Chase at Chepstow. Bradley will school Viking Flagship at David Nicholson's yard tomorrow.

Osborne's move was made with an eye to the future since he will partner Master Oats up to and probably including the Festival next March, while Adrián Maguire, Nicholson's stable jockey, is expected to recover from an ankle injury in time to partner Viking Flagship in his next race. Oshorne schooled the Gold Cup winner at Kim Bailey's stable yesterday morning, with the trainer reporting that "they went very well together."

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sport

Russell thrives on the method in his madness

Wicketkeepers, like goalkeepers, are widely held to fluctuate between the mildly eccentric and a sandwich short of a picnic. And if county cricketers were to be canvassed on which one of their members was considered to be the ultimate five-ball over, England's current custodian would almost certainly top the poll.

So does the man himself regard himself as, so to speak, a barking Jack Russell? "No, not at all. People who don't know me might think I'm... but no, I'm not... it's just that, well, how can I put it... er, um, yeah, let's face it, I am. Totally potty."

He also does not admit to being superstitious. "Who me? No, not at all." So why is he still batting in the same shirt, vest, flannels and trousers he wore when scoring his maiden Test (and first-class) century at Old Trafford in 1989? And what about that floppy sun-hat he has worn in every match since joining the staff at Gloucestershire in 1982? "Well, I'm a bit of creature of habit, I suppose. I like the same routine. I once had steak and chips for 28 consecutive nights in India, and I was the only one who wasn't ill. But superstitious? No, well, er, oh all right, I probably am."

Russell's room-mates, on the other hand, do not consider him to be anything other than completely normal. What could be more ordinary than a bloke who exists on mugs of tea, chocolate biscuits ("24 packets a month") bananas, honey, baked beans and breakfast cereal, washes his own kit, and hangs it from the lampshade to dry? "All except for the floppy hat, that is. That only gets washed twice a year, and I fold over a biscuit jar and a tea cosy before it goes into the airing cupboard. Only way it keeps its shape."

Russell has tried normality, and discovered that it does not work for him. In fact, it was responsible for 14 months of not being required by his country, and 14 Test matches passing him by while England looked to the likes of Alec Stewart and Stephen Rhodes to fulfil the modern concept of wicket-keepers being required to do more than merely keep wicket.

All through that period, Russell was told how unlucky he was, and how he (by comment consent the best wicketkeeper in England) should have been

Martin Johnson, in Johannesburg, discovers the secrets of the England wicketkeeper's success

"I had played 36 Tests when I was dropped on the last tour to Australia and I thought maybe that was my lot. The only things that kept me sane – or as sane as I ever will be – were my benefit year, taking on the captaincy of Gloucestershire, and my painting."

It was because Russell recognised his own idiosyncratic nature that he had to be pushed into the captaincy at Gloucestershire by the man he temporarily replaced last summer, Courtney Walsh. "I was always so tied up with my own game, sitting in the corner, worrying about what I was going to do, that I frankly didn't think I was up to the job."

"So it came as a pleasant surprise when it made me what I consider to be a much better player. I got a great kick out of captaining the side, and having to cope with other people's individual needs made me far less of an intense person. It's made me a lot wiser than I was, which is what you need when the bones start to ache – as they do – more and more each year."

"For instance, why didn't it occur to me five years ago to be a more positive cricketer? Why the hell didn't I? I suppose it's all part of life's learning process, and now I play each game as though it might be my last. For almost the first time I'm playing for the sheer fun of it."

That might be so, but, as Raymond Illingworth has said more than once on this tour: "If there was a more 100 per cent professional than Jack, I never met him." Almost everything Russell does is geared to perfecting his game, including becoming a near teetotaller. "I used to hit the booze too much in my early days, and it took me a while to realise how much it affected my reactions. Alcohol slows you down, so now I only touch the very occasional glass of wine."

Russell's value to England with the bat was once again being demonstrated when, on 50 not out during the first Test in Pretoria, he was ordered – protesting – from the field by the South African umpire Cyril Mitchley. "I've seen what lightning can do in these parts" Mitchley said, eying the approaching electrical storm, and

"However, it was pain centred more around the cardiac region which led Russell to re-appraise his approach to the game. "I can't tell you how much agony I felt not being on the side. Look at England versus Australia at Lord's. It's the ultimate of ultimates, and when I wasn't there at 11 o'clock on the Thursday morning, I felt totally depressed."

After that period, Russell was told how unlucky he was, and how he (by comment consent the best wicketkeeper in England) should have been

Mike Rowbottom examines why some of the best men and women in sport lose their motivation

When exceptional talent goes over the edge

When the most naturally gifted cricketer in the world expresses a desire not to play cricket – as Brian Lara has this week – one has to wonder whether too much talent can be a bad thing.

Lara is far from the first outstanding sporting figure to absent himself from his area of excellence, and will certainly not be the last. George Best, whose footballing ability set him apart from his fellow professionals, is perhaps the archetypal example here. However, over the years, others have come to grief for a variety of reasons – Mike Tyson in boxing, Jennifer Capriati in tennis, the multiple world record holder Henry Rono in athletics.

"The idea that people reach a certain point and then lose interest is a big area of study," Bruce Hale, an American sports psychologist based at the University of Stafford, said. "Stress and high-level competition begin to get to them."

"Many outstanding sportsmen and women are coddled and given special privileges, and many of them may develop the idea 'Hey, I'm God's gift to the world. All I have to do is

turn up and perform and everything will be fine.' But sooner or later reality will strike. They are going to run into crises."

One of the most profound crises for the high achiever may be the height of the achievement itself, according to Jonathan Zneimer, a member of the British Olympic Association's psychology advisory group.

"The usual motivating factors for sporting performers are to demonstrate ability and gain social approval. But elite performers such as Lara go beyond these needs and focus on the mastery of what they are doing."

Lara is obviously extra-talented and has established complete mastery in one area. So you have to ask – what's left for him to do? Where do his next goals lie? If you had talked to him a couple of years ago he would no doubt have said that Garfield Sobers' scoring record was one of them – but now he has that."

Another problematic factor for the super-talented sporting figure comes into play when there is a shift in their motivation for continuing success.

"Lara, for instance, has come



Naturals in neutral: the tennis player Jennifer Capriati (left) and the West Indian cricketer Brian Lara are great talents who have both sought a break from sport

into a lot of money relatively quickly," Zneimer said. "That represents a shift from intrinsic to extrinsic motivation. While cricket is well and truly under his control, maybe the financial factor is causing him to be disturbed."

Zneimer speculates that Capriati's fall from grace may have been influenced by a similar shift. "When she was just

playing the game she became successful because of her natural talents, but then she had to think about financial concerns, and parental concerns, and coaching concerns. It became too much."

The clear imperative in such cases is to maintain a balance between the sporting and non-sporting life. Perhaps Lara's time out is simply based in a de-

sire to redress that balance, but it is not an easy thing to do, and sporting organisations are increasingly seeking to offer support in this area.

The US Olympic Committee,

for example, is building support mechanisms into many of its sports to help competitors with mental as well as physical preparation.

In this country, the British Olympic Association has established a scheme entitled Planning for Success which involves a group of former top-level performers, such as the Olympic swimming gold medalist Adrian Moorhouse and Olympic sailing champion Mike McIntyre, addressing national squads.

One of the main elements of the course confronts the motivational side, as John Limna, from the BOA technical department, explained. "We stress the need to balance sporting commitment with the rest of life. It is not strictly a time balance, but a matter of becoming a whole person. You must not forget that there is more to life out there."

Paradoxically, young people who get the very best out of

themselves in sporting arenas are often unable to connect with the rest of their life.

"I think a lot of athletes don't realise that they have developed some very good life skills in their sport," Hale said. "They forget this when it comes to using them in real life. It is scary sometimes to go into new areas where you are not good. But it is a matter of making them aware of their capabilities."

More than one sports psychologist has praised the efforts of Manchester United's manager, Alex Ferguson, to prevent the extraordinary talents of Ryan Giggs from being compromised by undue media attention and commercial obligation. However, Ferguson has had to be careful he does not provoke his young player into an undesirable reaction.

When the rules were relaxed a little last year, Giggs lost his form at the same time as he found a higher media profile. Finding the correct balance in a sporting life is not easy, especially for those of extreme ability. Perhaps American Football teams have the right idea – they appoint their own priests.

Lara to 'review future'

Tony Cozier reports from Barbados on reaction to a hero suffering fatigue

As West Indies cricket tried to take in Brian Lara's sudden withdrawal from the team that arrives in Australia tomorrow for the World Series tournament of one-day internationals, the prime concern of officials was understanding the record-breaking batsman's problems.

Peter Short, president of the West Indies Cricket Board of Control, who tried last weekend to talk Lara into changing his mind, said the Trinidadian "feels he wants a complete break to review his future".

Lara's grueling itinerary

Year	Series	Tests	One-day matches
1994	(season with Warwickshire)	3	10
1995	In India	2	3
	In Australia	4	4
	In England	6	3
	In Sharjah	0	5
	Totals	15	25

In the year and a half since Lara surpassed the highest individual scores in Test and first-class cricket in the space of six weeks, he has played virtually non-stop. It is clear that tiredness was not the only factor, and probably not the principal factor in his decision. It came a day after he had been fined by a WICB disciplinary committee 10 per cent of his tour fee for breaching the code of discipline during the summer's tour of England.

Short and Alloy Lequay, president of the Trinidad and Tobago Cricket Board, agreed the fine had upset Lara. Lequay said Lara believed his problem in England, when he went absent without permission for three days, had been resolved by the tour committee and Short himself at the time.

The WICB will obviously consider what action should be taken against Lara in this case.

The West Indies' next engagement after Australia is the World Cup in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka in February and March and Lara's participation is in understandable doubt.

"I don't know how he's going to feel about going to the World Cup or how the West Indies Board is going to feel about his availability," Short said. "This is a matter the Board will have to discuss."

Lequay said Lara has told him he would captain the Trinidad and Tobago team in the domestic Red Stripe Cup, which starts on 26 January.

Bradford close to Newlove deal

Rugby League

DAVE HADFIELD

The future of Paul Newlove could be decided today, with signs that a deal to take him from the Bradford Bulls is close to being completed.

Bradford have called a press conference to announce the signings of players, the day after St Helens appealed to local businesses to help them put together a cash plus players offer that would bring the Great Britain centre to Knowsley.

St Helens have already had one part-exchange deal rejected

and now, for whom Bradford have been asking a world record £750,000, has pulled out of the Bulls' last two games. He turned down a move to Wigan two weeks ago and is thought to have set his heart on a move to St Helens.

Halifax have transfer-listed their winger, Mark Preston, at £70,000 – a price which will stir interest among clubs nearer

his Lancashire home. Preston lost his first-team place when he was injured earlier this season and is also reluctant to give up his job to become a full-time professional.

Both Castleford and Franco Botica have dampened speculation that the dual New Zealand international is about to make a return to rugby union with Moseley. John Joyner, the Castleford coach, has dismissed stories of a return as groundless rumour, while Botica says that he has merely been seen with an old friend who works for the Moseley club.

The former Wigan stand-off, rated as the best goalkicker in the game, has signed a two-year contract with Castleford, but has yet to play for them because of a broken leg sustained playing for the Auckland Warriors.

Oldham have transfer-listed their winger, Adrian Belle, at £45,000. Belle recently joined the police and has told his club he has no intention of turning full-time professional with the advent of the Super League.

O'Sullivan on song

Snooker

Ronnie O'Sullivan yesterday made himself the target that the other seven survivors will want the chance to knock over when he celebrated reaching the quarter-finals of the UK Championship yesterday by boasting: "I have got more ability than anyone else left in the tournament."

He said: "If I'm playing well, I can say I have won a tournament even before it started," he said. "That's how confident I feel. When I am flowing, it's a beautiful game. It's something you can't explain. Only a sportsman knows what it is like

when their game comes together. It's so easy and the best feeling in the world."

If a wary of sounding a touch too confident, the former champion, who completed a 9-2 victory over Scotland's Chris Small in Preston, added: "If I hit form I can win it again. But I cannot really look forward any further than my next match. There are no easy games and I've got a tough quarter-final coming up."

O'Sullivan began with a 7-1 overnight lead and although Small won the first frame of the day, O'Sullivan took only another 27 minutes to complete the job, aided by breaks of 42 and 38. Results, Sporting Digest, page 19

TODAY'S FIXTURES	
Football	
7.30 unless stated	
COCA-COLA CUP	
FOURTH ROUND	
Arsenal v Sheffield Wednesday (7.45)	
Leeds v Blackpool (7.45)	
Liverpool v Newcastle (7.45)	
Sheffield United v Birmingham (7.45)	
SECOND ROUND	
NORTHERN SECTION	
Swindon v Hertford (7.45)	
SOUTHERN SECTION	
Swindon v Bromley (7.45)	
FA UMBRO TROPHY Third qualifying round	
replay: Boston v Leek Town	
ICL LEAGUE Carlton Trophy round	
Second round: Epsom and Ewell v Lewes	
NORTHERN COUNTIES EAST LEAGUE	
Second round: Selly v Haslemere; Sheffield v Ossett Albion	
GREAT MILLS LEAGUE Premier Division: Twerton v Trowbridge	
Rugby Union	
7.30 unless stated	
CS INSURANCE SERIES TOUR MATCH (London and South East v Western Samoa (2.01) at Twickenham)	
REPRESENTATIVE MATCH: Royal Navy v New Zealand (1.30) at the Rec.	
CLUB MATCHES: Cambridge University v St Edmund's; Brighton & Hove v Newcastle (3.00); Teesside v Farnworth (7.00); St Edmund's v Newcastle (7.00); Bradford City v Walsall (7.00); Third Division: Cheltenham (7.00); Stevenage (7.00); Doncaster v Darlington (7.00); Lincoln City v Doncaster (7.00); Walsall v Rochdale (7.00); Wigan v Scarborough (7.00).	
AVON INSURANCE COMPETITION First Division: Wimborne v Colchester (2.00); Hatfield, Luton, Southampton and Norwich (2.00); Second Division: Burnley v Bradford (2.00); Chester v Chesterfield (2.00); Third Division: Bury v Chester (2.00); Fourth Division: Walsall v Wigan (2.00); Fifth Division: Walsall v Wigan (2.00); Sixth Division: Walsall v Wigan (2.0	

United youngster ready to replace Schmeichel

Football

Peter Schmeichel, Manchester United's Danish international goalkeeper, is to enter hospital for an elbow operation which will keep him out for two weeks.

Schmeichel will miss United's matches against Chelsea and Sheffield Wednesday after surgery to correct inflammation on his right elbow.

Alex Ferguson, the United

manager, views Schmeichel's absence as a great chance for the 21-year-old second-choice keeper to make his mark.

Pilkington's only start was in the 3-0 Coca-Cola Cup defeat by York City, although he did keep a clean sheet against Crystal Palace last season when he replaced Schmeichel after seven minutes.

"We all know Peter is a great keeper but Kevin is the perfect

replacement," Ferguson said. "I've no worries at all. Kevin is confident and competent and he will handle it all right."

The Everton striker Paul Rideout looks likely to be sidelined until the new year after a collision of heads with the Sheffield Wednesday defender Des Walker during Saturday's match at Goodison Park.

Rideout received 32 stitches in his lip, lost two teeth, damaged the roots of several others

and sustained a cracked palate, lacerations and bruising to his gums in the collision during the 2-2 draw.

Blackburn have agreed a deal with the Swedish First Division club Halmstad to take the striker Niklas Gudmundsson on loan until the end of the season, with an option on a permanent transfer.

Blackburn's manager, Ray Harford, who expects Gudmundsson to complete the deal

later in the week, said: "He is an attack-minded sort of left-wing-cum-centre-forward. He can play either wide or up the middle, has pace and hopefully will fit into our play."

Gudmundsson will not feature in tonight's Coca-Cola Cup fourth round tie at Elland Road. Harford said: "He's a bit tired at the moment, having spent a week in Thailand after the close of the Swedish season."

Celtic and Aberdeen have

both dismissed reports that the £2m striker Scott Booth is set to move from Pittodrie to Parkhead. There has been speculation over Booth's future since his side's Coca-Cola Cup final victory over Dundee on Sunday.

But a terse statement issued by Celtic yesterday said: "Manager Tommy Burns has dismissed rumours that Celtic are linked with Scott Booth."

And the Aberdeen manager, Roy Aitken, confirmed: "There

has been no bid from Celtic unless it was in invisible ink. I am trying to build a side to compete with the Old Firm and want to keep my best players."

The Aberdeen chairman, Ian Donald, revealed that money will be made available to Aitken for new players after the clearing of a £2.5m debt.

Ajax, the European champions, beat Grêmio of Brazil 4-3 on penalties to win the World Club Cup in Tokyo. Their cap-

tain, Danny Blind, scored the winning penalty after normal and extra time had failed to produce a goal.

The English referee David Elleray sent off Catalina Riviera, Grêmio's Paraguayan central defender, for his second bookable offence – a second successive foul on the teenage striker Patrick Kluivert in the space of three minutes. The result left South America leading Europe 33-21 in the annual match.

The twins who go to the heart of Bognor

FA CUP COUNTDOWN

Liz Searl talks to brothers hoping to shock Peterborough on Saturday

Mick and Paul introduce themselves, twirl around, and sit down after a display of musical chairs designed to confuse the interviewer and amuse the onlookers.

"Ha – you had a 50-50 chance to get me right and you lost it," laughs Paul Pullen. "Now go on and ask us something."

Bognor Regis Town FC has been blessed with the footballing talent of the Pullen twins since they joined the club, aged 16, in 1976. Mick was the first to make his debut, followed five months later by Paul ("the one who scores the goals"), followed by 21 seasons of confusion for match referees and ground announcers everywhere.

On Saturday it is Second Division Peterborough's turn, when Bognor are the visitors in the second round of the FA Cup. The Pullens both play at the back, and their proximity only increases the cases of mistaken identity, as Paul recalled: "In 1992 I fouled a Dulwich Hamlet player and the ref gave a foul – but then he sent



Identity kit: Paul Pullen (left) and his brother Mick have been mistaken for one another while representing Bognor

Mick off – I don't know how he managed it, and he refused to listen to us on the field."

In the end, it appears, the referee did Bognor Regis a favour because Mick was struggling with an injury, but Paul was not amused at the time. "I managed to make sure it was all sorted over from the manager, Jack Pearce for two seasons in 1992, but handing back the reins in 1994 when Pearce returned, 'I gave it up quite quickly,' he said.

A financial consultant for Prudential, Paul was once commercial manager of the club, a post which coincided with Bognor

or's memorable first-round FA Cup draw with Third Division Swansea in 1984 when he scored twice in the replay to take Bognor through to the second round.

Mick, who is now a buyer for a local building firm, has also had closer links to the club, taking over from the manager, Jack Pearce for two seasons in 1992, but handing back the reins in 1994 when Pearce returned. "I gave it up quite quickly," he said.

Right on cue 21-year-old Adam Beazley enters the boardroom. The composed left-

or and Mick have since returned to their purely footballing roles at the club, and have concentrated their efforts on coaching initiatives for the club's nine youth teams.

"Football is a team game, and to be honest we would rather the press just concentrated on the younger lads. It is nice when the young talent that we have gets respect, and we certainly have some promising lads here at the moment."

Right on cue 21-year-old Adam Beazley enters the boardroom. The composed left-

sided midfielder is in his third season with the club and his third year of a sports science degree in Chichester. "We have a lot of respect for Paul and Mick here and for the amount of years that they have been with the club," he said. "They're still around and they still play every week, but they do it because they are still good enough to play."

In fact, the twins have played in five of Bognor's tie in the FA Cup proper. They have yet to reach the third round, but go into Saturday's tie with considerable confidence. "I do it well,"

Photograph: Robert Hallam

playing well at the moment but everything will rest on how we adapt on the day," Mick says. "At this stage in our careers, though, we will be looking for a great final performance in the Cup."

Not for the first time the Pullens are preparing to bow out, but Pearce is in no hurry to find replacements. "They've said that for the last three years and I've managed to talk them out of it," he said. "If they continue to play as well as they are doing at the moment then I will do my damned best to talk them out of it again."

McGregor's induction into Nottingham Forest's first team has been the stuff of schoolboy fantasy. The 20-year-old striker, who replaced the injured Bryan Roy, scored the only goal as Frank Clark's team beat Lyon in the Uefa Cup.

That goal – and the enforced absence of Roy, Jason Lee and Andrea Silenzi – secured McGregor his first Premiership start against Manchester United on Monday, the youngster again scoring in the 1-1 draw.

McGregor admitted that the past seven days – in which he has emerged from anonymity to acclaim at the City Ground – was difficult to come to terms with. "When I came off the bench and got the goal against Lyon last week, that was something of a dream come true for me," McGregor said.

"But to start against Manchester United and score a goal was just absolutely fantastic, the best one of all. It's all a bit much to take in to be honest. I might seem level-headed but that's probably because I'm better than them. When you get the chance you've got to go out there and try and prove it."

"Whether the gaffer's going to keep me there is a different story but as long as I keep scoring it will make it harder and harder for him to bring some of the other lads back in."

McGregor is likely to get another chance, at Bolton on Saturday, although Lee could be fit to return at the expense of Stephen Howe after a thigh problem.

"At least the last eight days have reassured us about how bad Jason's injury is," Clark said. "It looked bad when he got it at Blackburn but he was so desperate to play against Lyon that he made a terrific effort before he had to rule himself out."

"You've got to be careful with that sort of injury. If you don't deal with it properly there's a danger of it calcifying, and another knock can be quite bad, but he's improving and has a good chance for Saturday."

North in 'bias' claim

Rugby Union

A team, they may think otherwise now.

"To take one obvious example, Neil Ashurst was absolutely outstanding against the South-West and still very good against London. His performance at Bridgewater brought back memories of Peter Winterbottom, and that is not disrespect to Richard Hill."

"Hill is a fine player and very highly regarded by all the North lads, which is why Ashurst's display was so impressive," Bagshaw said.

"Whatever people may say about the championship, it was London's thrilling win rather than England's a few weeks later that initiated rugby's great national revival."

"We want all our players to be available for that match, which is so important to the North," Bagshaw said.

"Whatever people may say about the championship, it was London's thrilling win rather than England's a few weeks later that initiated rugby's great national revival."

"We have won it for a while and have put a lot into developing our players and trying to pull them together as a successful team. We want to try to win it."

"The Midlands will also be fancying their chances and we want the strongest team we can bring together."

"We're hoping that the English people will appreciate what a Divisional win would mean to the North as a whole."

"The fact is that the two Divisions who have won both their games have four players in the team. The players are bound to be disappointed and I can sympathise with them."

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SPORT

£125m Sky deal agreed by League

GUY HODGSON
DAVID HELLIER
AND MATHEW HORSMAN

The extraordinary hold football has on television was demonstrated again yesterday when the Football League announced a £125m deal with BSkyB television. With it, the day when £1bn of television money finances the national sport moved closer.

The five-year contract, which begins next August, will mean up to 60 First, Second and Third Division matches will be screened live on satellite along with the three end-of-season Wembley promotion play-offs and games in the Coca-Cola Cup.

As for those people able to afford only terrestrial television, they will be limited to just the FA Cup live and highlights of the other competitions on BBC and ITV. The people's game has gone beyond the reach of some.

It has also gone into the realms of unprecedented wealth. In addition to yesterday's windfall, BSkyB, the BBC and ITV have reached a four-year agreement worth £135m for covering FA Cup and international matches, while BSkyB's contract to show Premiership matches comes up for renewal in August 1997. The bidding, if reports of ITV's in-

Hogging the ball: how Sky dominate football on British TV

Sky's contracts
FA Premier League: 60 exclusive live games a season.

Endsleigh League: 60 exclusive live games a season (from 1995-97 season, for five years).

FA Cup: at least one tie and replay exclusively live from the first round to semi-finals.

England Internationals: all games at Wembley exclusively live.

Scottish football: 9 league, 5 Tournaments Cup and 3 Coca-Cola Cup games live and exclusive a season (until end of 1997-98 season).

(contract ends 1996-97 season)

ITV contracts

Endsleigh League and Coca-Cola Cup exclusive live and highlights coverage (contract ends 1995-96 season).

matches, will almost certainly kill the threat of major clubs breaking away to form a Premier League Division Two.

Lee Walker, the League's controller of broadcasting, said: "It's a great deal. In pure financial terms it is the most lucrative we have ever signed. But it has far greater significance."

Nevertheless the delight was not without reservation. Ian Stott, the chairman of First Division Oldham Athletic, was cautious, saying: "In the long term we may live to regret what has happened because we might have achieved better terms if we had waited."

For some of our clubs this deal will be a lifeline," Gordon McKeag, the president of the League, said. "It will increase revenue and raise their viability at a crucial time. This agreement is the most important ever secured by the Football League and assures us of our autonomy."

The contract will increase the income derived from television from £5m to £25m a year for the Endsleigh clubs and, allied to extra advertising from live

with television companies for the rights to Premier games, which have not started yet.

"We have no intention of limiting ourselves to one bidder," a spokesman said. "It's clear that the Premier League is what everybody wants and the market for it will be competitive."

Rick Parry, the Premier League's chief executive added: "We believe the time ought to have been given to discuss the issue of coverage, the distribution of monies in the game and the opportunities offered by broadcasting technology."

"I am surprised that this deal has been done when there was no need to rush into it. However, it will have no effect on the Premier League's own television negotiations which will begin when we are ready."

Tim Crabbe, the chairman of the Football Supporters' Association, also had reservations. "By not having any matches on terrestrial television we will have difficulty attracting new fans to the game," he said. "Not everyone wants to buy a satellite dish."

"Television needs the game at the moment and perhaps the football authorities should dig in their heels a bit more and dictate what they want. They should tell television, 'Here are our fixtures and dates, now name your price'. A number of feature games have been switched to Sundays on ITV this season, meaning a lot of inconvenience and expense for the fans."

Since its launch in 1991, Sky Sport has relied heavily on football with more than 400 matches screened live during the past four seasons on two sports channels. In the first full season (1991-92) it broadcast 75 live games. But last season this total almost doubled to 143.

Sky already has contracts to broadcast 60 live Premiership games exclusively each season, one FA Cup tie and one replay live from the first round to the semi-finals and every England international at Wembley exclusively live.

Yesterday's deal means BSkyB now has an ice-hold on nearly all domestic football competition in England and Scotland. For "No turning back", the company's advertising slogan, perhaps it should now read "no turning off."

Pay up – and watch the game

MATHEW HORSMAN
Media Editor

The latest football deal between BSkyB and the Football League underscores the degree to which sport has become the driving force of pay television. It also confirms that the broadcasters, and not the game itself, will dictate how rights are divided.

The money on offer is outrageous. When the Premier League deal is renewed, probably sometime next year, British football will probably fetch

nearly £250m a year for TV rights – or nearly £1bn by 2000.

But that is only the beginning. With the introduction of digital TV from 1997, the way is open for wall-to-wall sports on a pay-per-view basis. The average viewer with a decoder will get 18 "over-the-air" channels, while satellite subscribers could receive as many as 200. Above all other programming, sport will be the driver for digital – as Sky has already realised.

The big winner among broadcasters, at least so far, has been BSkyB, 40 per cent owned by Rupert Murdoch's News

Corporation. Its control of Premier League matches on television has helped make it the most profitable TV company in the UK, earning £155m last year and now boasting nearly 4.2m subscribers.

Sky's very success could pose problems, as competitors look to barge in on a market that has proved so profitable. Already, the ITV company Carlton has looked closely at the possibility of bidding, while other broadcasters, including a handful from the Continent, may form consortia in an attempt to wrest the rights away from Sky.

It is a strange rugby world that permits Gallagher to participate in last week's Jean Evans testimonial match at Llanelli, but not Saturday's Kent v Hampshire County Championship match. But under the RFU's moratorium, the Evans match could not have taken place in England,

IS TOO MUCH TALENT BAD FOR YOU?

Mike Rowbottom on the young, gifted and burdened

18

Malcolm back in England frame

Cricket

Devon Malcolm's hopes of playing for England in the next Test rose sharply yesterday thanks to a damp and grassy strip of turf at The Wankers ground.

The Derbyshire fast bowler's chances of facing South Africa this week are remote after a thoroughly disappointing performance against Orange Free State in Bloemfontein.

But the England manager, Ray Illingworth, took one look at the pitch being prepared for the second Test, which starts in Johannesburg tomorrow, and said: "We've not discounted Devon at this stage. He's well in the running if they leave all that grass on it."

According to Illingworth's information, there are no plans to give the pitch another cut before play starts but Ashley Harvey-Walker, the former Derbyshire batsman who now serves as ground consultant to the Transvaal Cricket Board, indicated yesterday that the mower would be used once more before 10.30 on Thursday.

If it is, Malcolm's prospects of playing are likely to disappear along with the surplus grass. If not, he could find himself in a four-man England pace attack.

The tourists – and Illingworth in particular – would be loath to go into a Test without a front-line spinner. But the manager is ruling nothing out at this stage, insisting that no firm decisions will be taken until shortly before start of play.

The spinner Richard Illingworth did not bowl during England's net session yesterday because of a stiff back but both he and Angus Fraser (sight-groin strain) are expected to be fully fit by Thursday.

Gloucestershire left-arm seamer Mike Smith has been released from the England A tour of Pakistan. Smith's rib cartilage injury has not cleared up sufficiently for him to be in contention for a Test place either in Rawalpindi tomorrow or next week in Peshawar.

Martin Johnson talks to Jack Russell, page 18



Robin Smith concentrates on batting practice before tomorrow's Test. Photograph: AP

RFU block Gallagher's return

Rugby Union

STEVE BALE

John Gallagher has already had a comeback match in Wales but the former All Black full-back's hope of an early return to English rugby union after his years in rugby league were officially blocked by the Rugby Football Union yesterday.

It is a strange rugby world that permits Gallagher to participate in last week's Jean Evans testimonial match at Llanelli, but not Saturday's Kent v Hampshire County Championship match. But under the RFU's moratorium, the Evans match could not have taken place in England,

nor could Jonathan Davies, another returning league man, have already had two games for Cardiff.

Kent informed the RFU that they had selected Gallagher, disingenuously adding that as far as they were concerned he was coming to them from rugby union, i.e. the Stradey Park testimonial. Nice try. "The RFU's viewpoint is that he is not eligible to play even in a friendlies in England, let alone in competition," Tony Hallett, the secretary, said yesterday.

The attitude in Wales, not only to Jonathan Davies but to any other returning prodigal, is to make the welcome immediate – so much so that Davies, recovering from a hernia operation, is already on the Welsh Rugby Union payroll. By contrast Gallagher, who wishes to try his luck with Harlequins, will not be free to play for them until the end of the season.

Quins have, however, announced two other high-profile acquisitions. Davies's brother-in-law Phil Davies and another ex-Wales captain Robert Jones have signed registration forms which will permit them to appear for the London club in 120 days' time. Between them the No 8 and scrum-half have 100 Wales caps.

"I have been offered an excellent deal by Harlequins and although a lot can happen in 120

days I am confident things will work out," Jones said yesterday. After the failure of a previous attempt to sign Ieuan Evans, however, Dick Best, Quins' rugby director, is not holding his breath. "I remain sceptical; Welsh players are not in the habit of transferring to London," Best said yesterday.

Tim Rodber, speedily recovered from the shoulder injury that forced his early departure from the England-South Africa match, will lead the Midlands against Western Samoa at Leicester on Saturday. With the availability of Leicester and other players including Rodber, wholesale changes are made from the side who have won

both their Divisional Championship matches.

Most obviously a half-dozen players from the host club, including the entire front row, will be selected – though there is a degree of balance in the retention of Jim Quantrell of Rugby at full-back and the former Swansea wing Robert Subbuteo of Bedford in preference to the Tigers John Liley and Steve Hackney. And Wales' Western Samoa, Leicester, Saturday's opponents, will be led by (Bettws), M Allen (Northampton), B Robbie (Llanelli), H Thorncroft (Plymouth), G Rutherford, R Coombes, D Gough (Bath), J Williams (Cardiff), M Bayfield, T Rodber (Northampton), cap, C Tancock, N Back (Leicester). Replacement P Cattell (Llanelli), Piar (Worcester), J Tandy (Northampton), N Walker (Moseley), I Stansbury (Bedford).

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Murdoch at helm for 'hell on high water'

Sailing

Rupert Murdoch will be all at sea next month, but business adversaries should not start thinking that one of the world's most eminent captains of industry is about to let his hand slip from the tiller.

City-based sailors waiting to dismember Murdoch's empire will have to circle a while longer.

but sightings of strange submersibles in the Tasman Sea will be readily explained by the fact that the media tycoon has signed on as crew for one of the toughest ocean yacht races, which goes under the nickname "Hell on High Water".

The 630 nautical mile Sydney-to-Hobart race will start on Boxing Day with BSkyB's owner and sea dog publisher of

the *Times* and the *Sun* aboard the 23.7m (78ft) carbon-fibre sloop Sayaona, owned by his friend Larry Ellison, the chief executive of Oracle Computers of the United States.

For a man who never likes to lose, Murdoch's boat is the joint race favourite with the Australian maxi yacht, Brindabella.

The Sydney-Hobart has a

reputation for extremes of seas and weather, with the winds funneling through the Bass Straits a particular danger. Two sailors have died in the race's 50-year history and last year's event was notable for the survival of a crew member who spent 16 hours in the water after being washed overboard.

Murdoch is also noted for his durability and the News Corporation chairman is, in this case, no landlubber, having skippered his own yacht, the timber ketch Ilina, four times in the race in the 1960s, finishing second across the line in 1964. He has also sailed in several Sydney-to-Brisbane and Brisbane-to-Gladstone races along the eastern coast of Australia and cruised the Whitsunday Islands on the southern tip of the Great Barrier Reef.

To be first across the line is not the only target for Murdoch. Also up for grabs is the elusive race record of two days, 14 hours, 36 minutes and 56 seconds set in 1975. Get that in the bag and the *Sun* will be flagging "Goliath" headlines again.

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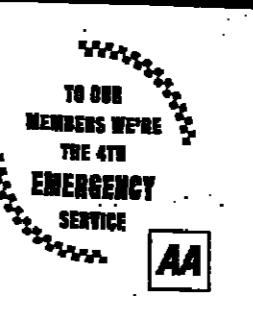
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Jackie 1520